

Amateur Photographer



FIRST LOOK

Olympus E-M10 III
More powerful than ever,
and much easier to use

Passionate about photography since 1884

Shoot your money maker

- Make cash from your travel shots
- Get your work accepted by stock agencies
- Secrets of the top-selling microstock shooter

FULL REVIEW

Canon EOS 200D
Lightweight affordable
DSLR takes on mirrorless



The art of the city

Street shooter Tony Sellen
on his minimalist success

Shooting smaller gigs How to get great band shots in smaller venues

OLYMPUS

OM-D

REDUCED TO PERFECTION

#ITSNOTYOUITSME

I NEED TO FOCUS
ON MY CAREER

Photographer: **Marcus Clackson**, marcusphoto.co.uk, @marcusphoto1

TIME TO BREAK-UP WITH YOUR OLD DSLR?

Equipped with 121 all cross-type On-chip Phase Detection focus points, the E-M1 Mark II features a revolutionary AF system which not only redefines speed and performance, but precision too.

Find out why so many are making the switch at:

itsnotyouitsme.co.uk





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Making money from photography used to be open to anyone with skill and business acumen. Now it's a challenge, with affordable pro-spec SLRs and ubiquitous smartphone cameras, the perceived value of the photographic image is low. Fortunately, carefully targeted pictures

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7days

A week in photography

can find a market. Turn to page 18 to discover some of the new rules of stock photography. We've also got our hands on some cracking new cameras, including the Olympus OM-D E-M10 Mark III and the compact and affordable Canon EOS 200D. Don't miss our no-nonsense guide to shooting bands in smaller venues too.

Nigel Atherton, Editor

ONLINE PICTURE OF THE WEEK



© CAROLYNE BARBER

The lady departs... off to pastures new by Carolyne Barber

Nikon D90, 100mm, 1/3200sec at f/3.5, ISO 320

This image was uploaded to our Twitter page using the hashtag #appicoftheweek.

'Ladybirds are beautiful creatures that have captivated me for a long time,' says Carolyne. 'The day that I took this I had spent many hours observing their behaviour as they crawled and flew among the grass

stalks. On this particular day it was very hot and the ladybirds were very active, so I decided to get my Nikon D90 and 100mm macro lens to see if I could capture them on the move. I was so lucky to be able to capture one in flight. I was thrilled to see the image back of my camera.'

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If you'd like to see your work published in *Amateur Photographer*, here's how to send us your images:

Email Email a selection of low-res images (up to 5MB of attachments in total) to appicturedesk@timeinc.com.

CD/DVD Send us a disc of high-resolution JPEG, TIFF or PSD images (at least 2480 pixels along its longest length), with a contact sheet, to the address on page 65.

Via our online communities Post your pictures into our Flickr group, Facebook page, Twitter feed, or the gallery on our website. See details above.

Transparencies/prints Well-packaged prints or slides (without glass mounts) should be sent by Special Delivery, with a return SAE, to the address on page 65.

NEWS ROUND-UP

The week in brief, edited by Amy Davies and Hollie Latham Hucke

Shutterstock updates watermarking system

Recently, Google produced a study to show how easily watermarks could be removed from stock images using an algorithm. In response, leading stock photography website Shutterstock has updated its watermarking system to ensure that no two watermarks are the same – therefore foiling the efforts of the algorithm.



**SanDisk
Ultra PLUS**

**400 GB microSDXC V10
@ A1**

World's highest-capacity MicroSD card

SanDisk has announced an ultra high capacity MicroSD card, featuring 400GB of memory. SanDisk's Ultra microSDXC UHS-I card comes two years after the firm broke records with a 200GB card, and is designed primarily for use in mobile phones. It features transfer speeds of 100MB/s – which equates to up to 1,200 photos per minute.

Special edition Leica limited to 10 units

An extremely limited 'Oslo Edition' of the Leica M Monochrom has been announced. Featuring a special black finish and the word 'Oslo' engraved into the body, the company has announced that only 10 will be produced. The camera, which comes as a package with a 28mm lens, will cost \$14,800 – about double the cost of a standard model.



New modular LED lighting system



Spiky Gear has launched the Spekular, a flexible, modular LED lighting system for photographers and videographers. It can be configured as a ring, a square, a strip, a star, a standard panel and more for increased flexibility. At just \$650, it's roughly half the price of comparable models. www.spikygear.com/spekular.

Nikon D850 selling fast

If you've been tempted by Nikon's newest full-frame model, the D850, you could have a long wait on your hands. Officially expected to be available from 8 September, Nikon has issued a notice that those who have already pre-ordered the camera may not receive it in time, indicating high levels of demand.



GET UP & GO

BATH



WEST YORKSHIRE



Field Work

British artist and photographer Liza Dracup gets her inspiration from the landscape and natural history of Great Britain. This exhibition in Bradford presents a decade of work, which showcases her innovative techniques in landscape photography. To coincide with the exhibition, Dracup will be holding an evening workshop on 21 September.

Until 23 September
www.impressions-gallery.com

Shooting For Stock workshop

This workshop is with professional freelance photographer Colin Hawkins, who has been supplying images for Getty Images, Cultura and SuperStock for more than 12 years. The aim of the day is to guide you through the process of shooting and selecting images, with the aim of licensing and selling them through image libraries and other stock suppliers.

18 September, www.rps.org

BIG picture

Honourable mention in top travel photography competition

The prestigious National Geographic Travel Photographer of the Year 2017 results have been announced. This year's contest recognises spectacular photos taken within the last two years, with entries in three categories – Nature, People and Cities. This photo (left), 'The Man's Stare' by Moin Ahmed, received honourable mention in the People category and also caught our eye. It was taken on a rainy morning at Tongi Railway Station, Gazipur, Bangladesh. Ahmed was taking photos when a train from Dhaka pulled in. 'I saw a pair of curious eyes looking at me through the misty window, and next to him a black umbrella shielded passengers from the rain. It created a dreamy moment.'

The full list of winners and honourable mentions can be seen at travel.nationalgeographic.com.

Words & numbers

A portrait is not made in the camera but on either side of it

Edward Steichen

US Photographer, 1879-1973

The most interesting things to see, to do and to shoot this week. By Hollie Latham Hucke

LONDON



Mountains of Kong

Jim Naughten's latest project takes the viewer back in time to a fabled place, which may or may not have ever existed. Naughten has created a series of stereoscopic images that tell a story as he imagines a fictitious record made for posterity and scientific purposes during an expedition of the mountain range.

Until 21 October

www.michaelhoppengallery.com

EDINBURGH



Shadows of War

This is the first exhibition to focus exclusively on Roger Fenton's pioneering photographs of the Crimean War, taken in 1855. Fenton was the first photographer to document a war for public consumption. These images from the Royal Collection are being shown at the The Queen's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse.

Until 26 November

www.royalcollection.org.uk

LONDON



Sleeping by the Mississippi

This exhibition coincides with the launch of the latest edition of the book of the same name that was first released 13 years ago. Evolved from a series of trips along the Mississippi River between 1992 and 2002, the large-format colour images capture life along America's iconic yet oft-neglected 'third coast'.

19 September-21 October

www.beetlesandhuxley.com

\$1.6 billion

The cost of a new football stadium in Atlanta that has a roof that looks and works like the aperture in a lens.



The new X-E3 mirrorless camera boasts Bluetooth low-energy wireless communication

X-E3 mirrorless in rangefinder style

FUJIFILM has revealed the details of the latest model to sit in its esteemed X-series line-up of APS-C cameras.

Following on from the popularity of the X-E2 and the X-E2S, the X-E3 is crafted in a rangefinder-type style, being flat in appearance and with the viewfinder placed to the left.

Like other cameras in Fujifilm's X-series, it features a 24.3-million-pixel X-Trans CMOS sensor, which is coupled with the powerful X-Processor Pro, the latest version

available for Fujifilm cameras.

A new feature, which makes its debut in the X-E3, is Bluetooth low-energy wireless communication. This allows photographers to pair the camera with their smartphone or tablet for easy transfer of pictures using minimal power – a standard Wi-Fi connection is also available.

On the rear of the camera, the LCD monitor is touch-sensitive, which along with supporting touch-shot, touch AF and focus area selection, now has the ability to

understand gestures, such as pinch to zoom, or flicking through images.

Updates have been made to the AF algorithm, particularly in regards to tracking moving subjects. Fujifilm claims it is twice as fast as previous models, and is capable of locking onto smaller subjects. Speeds of up to 0.06secs are promised. There's also 5fps shooting available, as well as a quick start-up time of 0.4secs, and a shutter lag time of 0.050secs.

For the first time in an X-E series camera 4K video recording is included, as well as Full HD. Film Simulation modes can be used, while video can also be output to an external monitor via the HDMI port. Audio can be enhanced by using the microphone port.

Other features include a 0.39in, 2,360k-dot OLED colour viewfinder and an Advanced SR Auto mode where the camera chooses the optimum settings for a given scene.

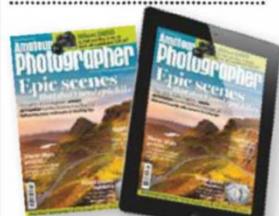
Accessories will also be available, and the XF lens range now totals 25. The Fujifilm X-E3 will be out this month, with a retail price of £849 body only, or £1,249 with an 18-55mm f/2.8-4 lens.



First true macro lens for Fuji X cameras

FUJIFILM has announced the Fujinon XF80mm f/2.8 LM OIS WR Macro, the first 1.0x magnification mid-telephoto macro lens for the X-series range. With an optical construction consisting of 12 groups, including one aspherical lens, one Super ED lens and three ED lenses, along with a Floating Focus system, the lens is ideal for close-up photography.

Sharp shots captured while using the lens handheld is promised thanks to the optical image stabilisation system, while there's also a fast and silent autofocus system thanks to linear motors. The lens benefits from a weather- and dust-resistant design, and can also operate in low temperatures. Available from November 2017, the XF80mm f/2.8 LM OIS WR Macro will have a retail price of £1,249.



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* when you pay by UK Direct Debit

Fujifilm announces raw conversion software

FUJIFILM has announced it is developing software that will work in conjunction with its cameras to convert raw images.

The Fujifilm X RAW Studio will enable photographers to convert raw files quickly once a camera is connected to a Mac or PC via USB cable. Utilising the X Processor Pro in the camera, rather than the CPU of the computer, it promises to retain exceptional image quality.

As raw files have increased in size, batch conversion of multiple images can be extremely time consuming but by working with the X Processor Pro, batch processing is handled much more efficiently.

Also announced is a set of free firmware upgrades for a range of Fujifilm models, including the X-Pro2, X-T2, X100F and X-T20. The upgrade brings



The new software will mean batch processing will be more efficient

with it support for the new Fujifilm X RAW Studio software, as well as a host of other improvements.

The company says it has spoken to existing X-series users to develop the updates, based on the needs and feedback of photographers. There's AF improvements for moving subjects, support for tethered shooting and additions made to 4K

video recording for the X-Pro2.

The new software is due to be available from late November, while the firmware upgrades will be ready to download for the X-T2 and X-T20 from late November, and late December for the X-Pro2 and the X100F.

For more details of the firmware improvements, see www.fujifilm.com.

GFX series adds sixth lens to range

A NEW lens for Fujifilm's medium-format GFX series, the GF 45mm f/2.8 R WR is set to be the sixth lens in the GF Lens range. With a compact and lightweight design, as well as a 35mm equivalent focal length of 36mm, the lens is ideally suited to street and documentary photography.

Like other GF lenses, the GF 45mm f/2.8 R WR is compatible with the GFX 50S, as well as having the resolving power to support any further cameras released in the future. Nano GI coating helps to keep ghosting and flare to a minimum, and it is also dust and weather resistant.

Constructed in 8 groups and 11 elements, including one aspherical lens and two ED lenses, the lens is designed to produce minimal chromatic aberrations. The lens weighs just 490g, with a maximum diameter of 88mm.

Fujifilm also revealed a lens roadmap,

showing a further two GF lenses in development – a telephoto prime lens and a teleconverter. The GF 45mm f/2.8 R WR will be available to buy from November, with a retail price of around £1,699.



The GF 45mm f/2.8 R WR weighs just 490g

For the latest news visit www.amateurphotographer.co.uk

New Books

The latest and best books from the world of photography. By the AP team



Vogue: The Covers (Updated)

By Dodie Kazanjian, Abrams, £45, 304 pages, hardback, ISBN 978-1-41972-753-5



THIS is certainly a book you won't mislay easily – it's an updated version of *Vogue: The Covers*, featuring a knockout image of Rihanna 'dressed' in one of the skimpiest outfits in history. The updates include every cover since 2010, featuring such millennial heroes as Kim and Kanye, Lena Dunham and Michelle Obama. For fans of vintage *Vogue*, the book also features classic covers from the past 125 years, many from before the 1940s (when illustrations were the norm). So many great photographers have shot *Vogue*'s cover such as Richard Avedon, Irving Penn, Bruce Weber, Herb Ritts and Annie Leibovitz. This book is a fascinating chronicle of changing tastes in fashion, and how photographers responded to this while at the same time preserving their unique creative vision and keeping *Vogue*'s formidable editors happy. It's not particularly cheap at £45, but is beautifully produced and designed, and includes four new frameable cover prints that can be removed from the back of the book. **Geoff Harris** ★★★★☆

Robert Doisneau: The Vogue Years

by Robert Doisneau and Edmonde Charles-Roux Flammarion, £45, 360 pages, hardback, ISBN: 978-2-08020-317-5



ROBERT Doisneau is best known for his humanistic approach to street photography and as being a pioneer of photojournalism. This book sheds light on the lesser images taken throughout his time working with *Vogue* between 1949 and 1965. He was granted access to high-society balls, elite events and behind-the-scenes fashion shows, allowing him to capture remarkable images of celebrities of the time such as Picasso and Jean Cocteau. The book also shows stunning images of post-war French cities and successfully portrays the spirit of the era. Doisneau's black & white photographs capture moments in time, so this book is a must for anyone who appreciates elegance and refined style. **Molly Yates** ★★★★☆

Olympus OM-D E-M10 Mark III

With 4K video and a redesigned user interface, Olympus's latest mirrorless OM-D looks like a great option for first-time camera buyers.

Andy Westlake
takes a first look

At a glance

£699.99

with 14-42mm EZ lens

- 16MP Four Thirds sensor
- 2.36M dot EVF
- 8.6fps shooting
- 5-axis in-body stabilisation
- 4K video recording



GOVER the past decade the camera industry has changed dramatically. Casual photographers now use smartphones rather than compact cameras, and share their photos instantly online. But some of these budding photographers inevitably then look to upgrade to a 'proper' camera. So the traditional camera manufacturers' challenge is how best to appeal to these potential customers.

Olympus has introduced its latest model, the OM-D E-M10 Mark III into such a market. On the surface it looks like a minor update to the two-year-old E-M10 Mark II, but Olympus has radically overhauled its user interface. I had the chance to use the camera before its official launch, and I think the firm has done a pretty good job.

The Olympus OM-D E-M10 Mark III is due to go on sale in mid-September for £699.99 with the slimline 14-42mm f/3.5-5.6 EZ electronic zoom lens, with a choice of black or silver finishes. Opting for the larger, mechanical-zoom 14-42mm f/3.5-5.6 II R will save you £50, and the camera will also be available body-only for £629.99.

Features

Olympus has based the E-M10 Mark III around a 16-million-pixel Four Thirds sensor that provides a standard sensitivity range of ISO 200 to 25,600. A continuous shooting rate of 8.6fps is on offer, dropping to 4.8fps when you need focus and exposure to be adjusted between shots. The autofocus system is adapted from the pro-level OM-D E-M1 Mark II, but relies on

Advanced Photography mode

PERHAPS the E-M10 III's best new idea is its Advanced Photography (AP) mode. This takes a set of existing features that were previously hidden in the menus, and groups them onto a single position on the mode dial, making them much easier to access. Here you'll find such things as double-exposure, high dynamic-range and silent modes, alongside several clever features that are unique to Olympus, including Keystone Correction for fixing converging verticals, and Live Time and Live Composite modes for long-exposure shots at night.



Shortcut button
The button beside the power switch now brings up a touch-sensitive function menu, with options that depend on the current shooting mode



The E-M10 Mark III's stylish design and twin control dials are unusual at this price point

contrast detection only. It uses 121 focus points that cover practically the entire frame, and you can either select an individual point or use a group of nine.

The camera's touchscreen tilts 90° up and 45° down, and above it there's a 2.36-million-dot EVF with a decent 0.62x equivalent magnification. Olympus's 5-axis image stabilisation is built in and Wi-Fi is on board for connection to a smartphone or tablet.

Regarding video, the E-M10 Mark III gains the ability to record at 4K resolution (3840x2160) and 25fps, and 8MP stills can be extracted from footage. You can also shoot in Full HD (1920x1080) and up to 50fps. However there's no option to attach an external microphone.

Body and design

Olympus has re-used the existing body design of the E-M10 Mark II, with all the same buttons and dials. But many of them have been re-purposed with the aim of making the camera easier to use. A careful choice of materials makes the Mark III look and feel rather more

expensive than it really is. With the retractable 14–42mm EZ zoom, it's also compact and easy to carry around.

Two electronic dials on the top-plate change exposure settings, while the exposure mode dial alongside includes a full auto mode for novices, alongside PASM modes for enthusiasts. The SCN position gives access to a large range of subject-based scene modes, with a new touch interface. Olympus's signature Art Filters are also on board.

Many of the camera's buttons have changed functions. So while the d-pad was previously used to move the focus point directly, you now have to press the left key first; the other keys give direct access to ISO, flash and drive modes. You can also use the touchscreen to move the AF point, and double-tapping the screen turns the touchpad AF on and off – fixing the problem of inadvertently resetting the focus point with your nose.

Olympus has also stripped down its notoriously over-complicated menus, and I think it has done a really good job. The E-M10 Mark III still offers broadly the same degree of customisation as mid-range DSLRs, but looks far less overwhelming to new users than the Mark II did. Unfortunately though, Olympus has over-simplified its in-camera raw conversion, making it more difficult to adjust pictures before sharing them online.

Advanced features are now much more accessible than before



First impressions

The OM-D E-M10 Mark III is more interesting than it at first looks. Crucially, its overhauled interface should make it more approachable for new users. With a strong feature set in an attractively designed body at a keen price point, it looks like it will be a great choice for smartphone photographers looking to buy their first 'proper' camera, but it should also be a capable second body for owners of Olympus's higher-end OM-Ds. Stay tuned for our full review.

Lumix GH5 firmware upgrade



The firmware update improves AF and video performance

PANASONIC has announced a firmware upgrade for its flagship mirrorless model, the Lumix GH5. A comprehensive update, Firmware 2.0 brings a wide range of improvements, including video and AF performance. In still image mode, the AF system should now be better placed to cope with low-contrast subjects, while AF tracking in video is enhanced.

Another interesting new feature thanks to the latest

firmware is the ability to shoot tethered via USB with Lumix Tether PC software, as well as improvements to time-lapse shooting.

Panasonic says that the improvements have been implemented after extensive consultation with photographers and videographers. The firmware software will be available to download from the end of September, for more information see www.panasonic.com.

Canon's new specialist macro flash



The new flash is designed for shooting in compact spaces

CANON has announced the Macro Twin Lite MT-26EX-RT, a new specialist flash unit for shooting in compact spaces. It is ideal for product and food shots, as well as wildlife close-ups and dental imagery. Following on from its predecessor, the MT-24EX, the new model features improvements to illumination power, better flexibility, enhanced durability and usability.

It features Macro Twin lights with moveable flash tubes. High-brightness white LED focus lamps allow the camera to focus easily on objects, or gauge how lighting will affect the shot. The MT-26EX-RT will be available from November, with a retail price of £1,079. Visit www.canon.co.uk for more details on the new features.



Viewpoint

Nigel Atherton

How small can you make a camera with a usefully large sensor? If anyone knows the answer to that it's Sony, as it demonstrated at IFA

I have just come back from Internationale Funkausstellung Berlin, or IFA as it's more widely known, in Germany. It is Europe's biggest consumer technology show, with nearly a quarter of a million visitors pouring into Berlin's exhibition centre every year to view the latest gadgets in the fields of TV, audio, mobile, home appliances, car tech and, to a lesser extent, photography. The show started way back in 1924 and has debuted an impressive list of inventions over the years including, among others, the world's first car radio (1932), the first colour TV (1937), the cassette recorder and audio cassette (1963) and the compact disc (1981). Albert Einstein made a live broadcast from IFA at the 1930 show.

Innovative new cameras are usually saved for the Photokina trade show, in neighbouring Cologne, but this year Sony revealed the RXO, the world's first action camera with a 1in sensor (as opposed to a small, smartphone size one). Now, I don't suppose there are that many AP readers who are going to be strapping one of these puppies to their snowboarding helmets, but even if you aren't the target demographic for an action camera you have to gasp in awe, once again, at Sony's incredible talent for miniaturisation.

The RXO is tiny, measuring just 59x40.5x29.8mm. You could fit three of them within the footprint of an iPhone 5. Yet inside it contains a 1.0-type stacked 15.3MP Exmor RS CMOS sensor, a Bionz



IFA in Berlin is Europe's biggest consumer technology show and dates back to 1924

processor and a 24mm Zeiss T* Lens. Despite its size, the RXO boasts an amazing spec sheet. You can shoot stills at 16fps at shutter speeds up to 1/32000sec. Or you can shoot video at 4K resolution or at 40x Super Slow motion. The camera is shockproof, crushproof and waterproof down to 10 metres – or 100 metres with the optional housing – and you can trigger up to five of them at once with your smartphone, or 15 with the optional radio commander. That's if your pockets are deep enough, as it will cost you the best part of £800 for one.

It's easy to become blasé about technological achievements like this – although I don't suppose anyone at GoPro is feeling particularly blasé about it right now. However, it makes me wonder how far we can go with camera miniaturisation, and how far we want to go. The RXO is just too small to be practical as a handheld device, unless you have hands the size of an infant. But imagine if Sony applied exactly the same design around an APS-C sensor, or a full-frame one. Or even a medium-format sensor. The RXO shows that even though its Alpha 7 mirrorless cameras are very small as full-frame cameras go, they could be made smaller still – but it's the ergonomics that prevent them from doing so.



Tiny but with an amazing spec sheet – Sony's RXO

Nigel Atherton is Editor of *Amateur Photographer*

Do you have something you'd like to get off your chest? Send us your thoughts in around 500 words to the address on page 65 and win a year's digital subscription to AP, worth £79.99

In next week's issue

On sale Tuesday 19 September



Turbo power

Take our tips from the top for first-class car photography



Sony Alpha 9

World-renowned sports photographer Bob Martin tests Sony's high-speed full-frame mirrorless camera

Insight Astronomy Photographer of the Year

We look at the star performers of 2017

APOY Round Four

The results from our 'City clickers' round

SIGMA

With F1.8 brightness, this telephoto lens
for full-frame cameras further
strengthens the Art line's prime options.

A Art

135mm F1.8 DG HSM

Dedicated lens hood and padded case included.

Available for Sigma, Canon and Nikon AF cameras.

Made in Japan



Mount Converter MC-11

Use your SA or EOS mount SIGMA lenses with
a Sony E-mount camera. Sold Separately.



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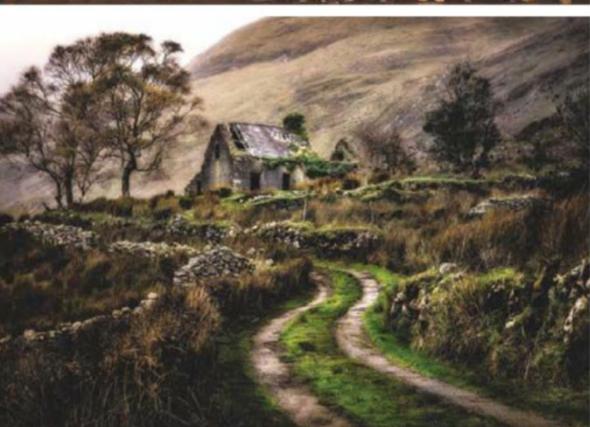
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© JAMES WILKINSON



Award-winning members of the Cheltenham Camera Club



© ANDREW KELLY



© DWA STUDIO

Join the Club

Cheltenham Camera Club

Charlton Kings, Cheltenham

A vibrant and relaxed club that welcomes all newcomers

When was the club founded?

Cheltenham Camera Club is one of the oldest and largest camera clubs in the country. It was established in 1865.

What does it offer new members?

Guests and new members are made welcome; we encourage a 'new buddy' atmosphere for new members. We understand that all our members have different aspirations and our programme accommodates this. We run tuition courses on subjects ranging from camera techniques through to post processing. We also have sub-groups focusing on Nature, Studio and Audio Visual work, and arrange photographic outings.

Describe a typical club meeting.

Our weekly club meeting, held each Thursday, lasts for around two hours. The theme varies on a weekly basis; we have guest speakers, internal and external competitions and two 'member print appreciation' meetings. We also supplement our weekly meeting by holding a meeting on the first Tuesday of each month.

Do you invite guest speakers?

We generally invite upwards of 12 keynote speakers, all with different disciplines. In the last few years we have also held external events with speakers such as Charlie Waite and David Noton.

Do members compete in regional or national competitions?

Our members are actively encouraged to enter such activities. The club holds 'Battles' against other clubs in the South West, and we compete against clubs in

Australia, the US and Germany on an annual basis. Many of our members also enter national and international salons. Indeed, the club hosts its own International Salon, with over 7,000 entries from 55 countries, now in its sixth year.

Has the club, or individual members, ever won any big competitions?

Several individual members have won gold medals and other awards in national and international salons.

What about national photographic society distinctions?

We have 31 members who have gained a photographic distinction, and we encourage and support members who wish to gain them. We also appreciate that many of our members just wish to enjoy their hobby, so there is no pressure to obtain a distinction.

What are the most popular photographic genres among your members?

Our members display a broad spectrum of images. Landscape, Nature, Portraiture and Still Life, followed by Sport and Altered Reality are the most dominant.

How old are your members?

The age profile ranges from late 30s to mid-80s, but the majority are in their 60s. We try to encourage younger members by hosting and running such events as the Gloucestershire Young Photographer of the Year Competition.

What are the club's goals for the future?

Having just completed our 150th anniversary celebrations, we would like to think that our predecessors would find the club still vibrant, a place to exhibit and learn, and a place where members feel relaxed.

Club essentials

Meets Holy Apostles Church Hall, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham, GL52 6HW on Thursday evenings from September to May, at 7.30 for 7.45pm. Meetings are usually concluded by 10.00pm.

Membership For new members, a visitor's fee of £3 is payable for up to three visits, which will be deducted from the chosen subscription plan. The concession rate is available to members who are in receipt of a State Pension or unemployed. Subscriptions: Standard Single £44; Double £71; Concessionary Single £37; Concessionary Double £54; Junior (under 18) £10; Associate £12.

Contact info@cheltenhamcameraclub.co.uk or publicity@cheltenhamcameraclub.co.uk

Website www.cheltenhamcameraclub.co.uk

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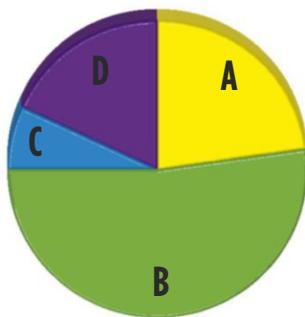
PHOTOGRAPHY

EISA AWARDS 2017-18

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EISA is the unique association of over 50 international special interest magazines in hi-fi, home theatre, photo, video, in-car and mobile electronics, from 25 countries (now including Australia and the USA). Every year the EISA jury of experts rewards the best products in each class with a coveted EISA Award.





In AP 2 September we asked...

Do you currently use a 'classic' film camera?

You answered...

A Yes, I use a European/Russian one	23%
B Yes, I use Japanese classic	52%
C No, but I use older digital cameras	7%
D No, I prefer to use up-to-date equipment	18%

What you said

'What about European (includes Russian) and Japanese classic cameras? Mine include De Vere and Gandolfi from the UK, Linhof, Alpa and Leica from mainland Europe, and Nikon and Toho from Japan. And what about American cameras? Graflex, for a start.'

'Apparently I'm "happy to be an outsider" because I use an older digital model or two. Cool!'

'Define classic. I've got a Canon 50E – that's EOS mount. So is that classic, or modern or what? I've also got a late Bronica, I didn't know they were just about to close down the factory.'

'I've got two Olympus OM-1 cameras, unfortunately out of use for various reasons. I also have three Praktica Super TL 1000s, two of which are in more-or-less regular use.'

'Can't take part because although I have a number of such cameras I have not used them since I went digital.'

'I am not sure the Nikon F5 is considered a classic but I have a couple and even use them occasionally. Not to mention an Olympus XA that hasn't been used for a long time.'

Join the debate on the AP forum

This week we ask...

Have you ever made money from your travel photography?

Vote online www.amateurphotographer.co.uk

Inbox

Email amateurphotographer@timeinc.com and include your full postal address.

Write to Inbox, Amateur Photographer, Time Inc. (UK), Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough Business Park, Farnborough, Hants GU14 7BF

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Printed matter

I totally agree with Barry Shaw's letter (AP 19 Aug 2017) about AP's *Inbox*, and am exceedingly happy to hear that it will soon be returning to its usual two-page format. Having *Inbox* as only a single page, and with one column of that page taken up by the reader poll pie chart, is simply not enough. Transmitting photographers' views is a vital part of AP and, no, I do not want to read them on Facebook. Like Barry Shaw, I want to be able to enjoy a paper copy of AP over coffee and cake or, more usually, a glass of beer.

But there is one aspect of having a print copy of AP that Barry Shaw does not mention, and which I consider crucial. It is that having a paper copy allows me to scrawl over it and annotate it with a red pen, highlighting things that I find interesting or useful, things that I agree or disagree with, and so on. All issues of AP receive this treatment at my hands and, before they are recycled, I tear out and keep pages of special interest for future reference. I have been reading AP for many years and have many hundreds of such torn out pages, and the amount that I have learnt about photography over the years by means of this simple method is truly vast. And, to me, that is one of the things that AP is, and always has been, all about. **Adrian Lewis, Bristol**

Great to hear this – as you can imagine we definitely think there is a lot of life in print media yet! – Geoff Harris, deputy editor

Win! SAMSUNG

The EVO + microSD Card has added memory capacity and multi-device functionality. This UHS-I Speed Class 1 (U1) and Class 10 compatible card is perfect for capturing photos and video recording. www.samsung.com



Not so picture perfect

I purchased AP's 26 August issue to learn 'How to make sure that what you see is what you print' as per the magazine's cover, but was disappointed to find the article effectively an advertorial for a product costing upwards of £80, and some general colour commentary from pros. I was hoping to be enlightened as to why when I print a picture – using an unedited JPEG file on the same Canon printer, the same paper, but loading the picture file from varying sources, direct from SD card into printer, via Canon printer software or via Photoshop, all

unedited – the end colour rendition is different on each print. My camera is an Olympus OM-D E-M10. Perhaps a more grassroots technical article would be possible, based on whether I need to spend what would otherwise be a contribution towards a new laptop on the product you reviewed. I assume other calibration tools are available albeit you did not mention them. **Kevin Gardner, Bristol**

Home printing can be tricky, Kevin, and there are limits as to how much we can cover in one issue, which is why we ran a



Kevin Gardner was hoping to get more from AP's 26 August issue

six-page feature on solving printing problems the previous week (AP 19 August). Rest assured, it's a subject that we intend to cover more of in the future. Naturally the Spyder5 is just one of many tools you can use for accurate colour management; I have also heard good reports of the X-Rite ColorMunki Photo (xritephoto.com/colormunki-photo) – **Tracy Calder, technique editor**

Compare the market

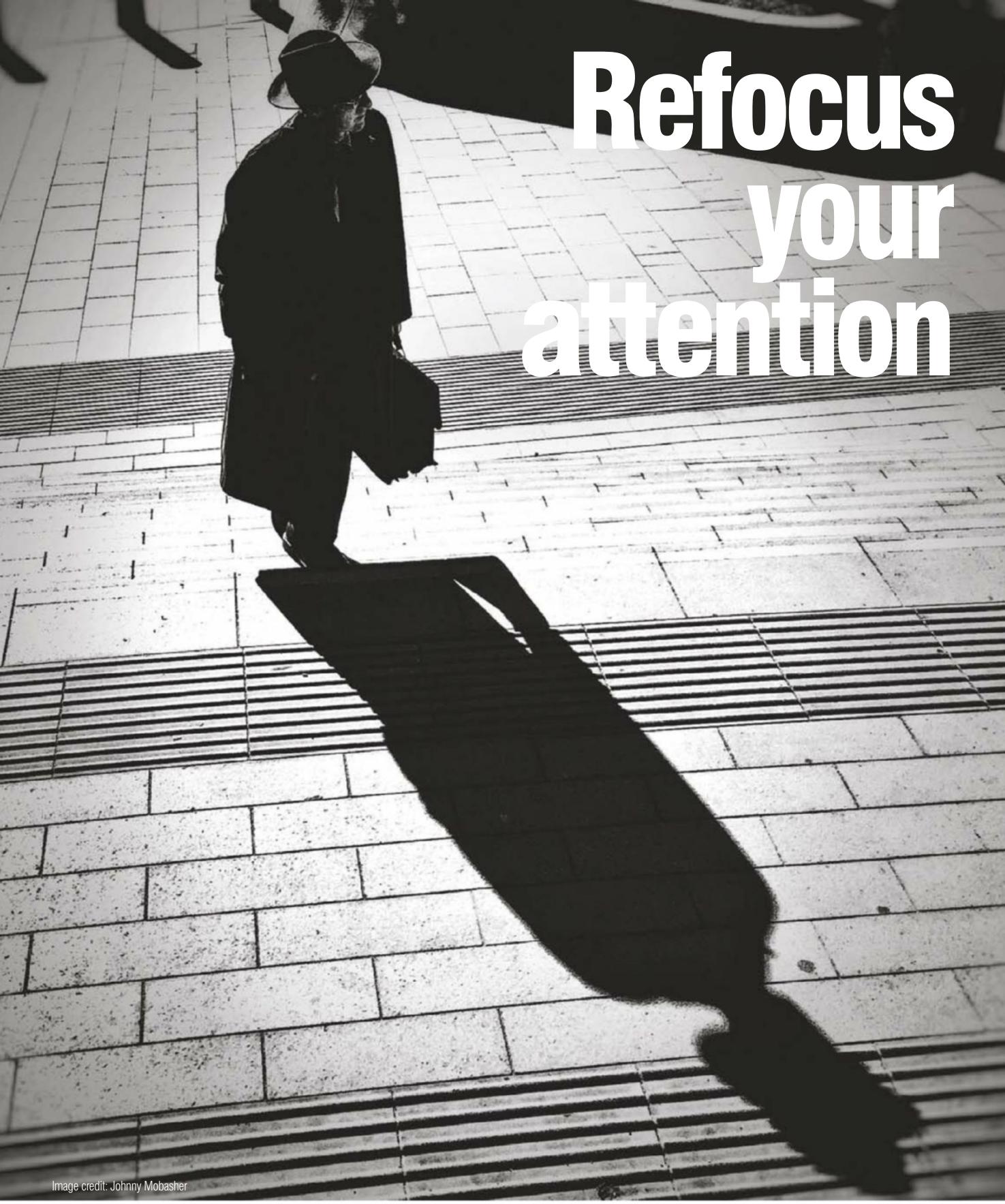
I'm finding AP's equipment listings most interesting. Oddly, the full-frame Fujifilm cameras are quoted as being lighter than Olympus's! And its 10-24mm lens has both a filter thread and image stabilisation, which the Olympus 7-14mm hasn't. This seems to bode well for a 'wide-angler' like me. However, a second body would be vital for those pictures that need longer lenses – they always seem to turn up while shooting extra-wide shots.

Bill Houlder, via email

Think about ink

Following your survey where readers stated that the biggest issue with printing photos was the cost of ink cartridges – perhaps it's time for a test of compatible cartridges where we can take into consideration quality/cost/risk of damage to printer/consistency etc. **John Langham, Leicestershire**

In the dog house In 26 August *Inbox*, we should have attributed the picture of Coco the puppy and the accompanying letter about his Sigma 70-200mm lens, to Frank McIlpatrick and not to Bill Houlder. Apologies to both readers.



Refocus your attention

Image credit: Johnny Mobasher

www.streetphotography.com

Our Revolution is to expose the BEST for free. To inspire & educate. If you have outstanding street photography, street-portraits, street art-photography, street-documentary or have something impressive to say about the past, present or the future of street photography, then we'd like to hear from you. Visit the new website to discover more.



The life of Reilly

For **Craig Reilly**, changing cameras led to a complete change of direction, and he hasn't looked back since

Within the diverse world of photography we don't always find our niche straight away. For Craig Reilly it was a change of camera system that also inspired him to try street photography for the first time. Now he teaches workshops in the subject and is part of the prestigious Street Photography International collective (#spicollective) which, with more than 300,000 followers, is one of the most popular street photography channels on Instagram.

'When I had my DSLR I was shooting mostly landscapes, and some travel shots because I was working for British Airways,' recalls Craig. 'But it got to a point where I didn't enjoy taking my DSLR kit out with me, because it was so big and heavy. When I bought my first mirrorless camera, the Olympus OM-D E-M10, the size and weight difference was astronomical. I could fit the body, with the 17mm lens, into my jacket pocket, and I didn't

notice any appreciable loss in image quality. It was a no-brainer.'

Craig started going out in London with it, shooting a few urban landscapes, and found the smaller camera worked to his advantage. 'It made me inconspicuous, and the technology that it featured – especially the tilt screen and touch-shutter features (whereby you can focus and shoot a picture simultaneously by touching the subject on the screen) – which weren't available on my DSLR, really lent themselves to street photography.'

'I started looking at street-photography websites, and became inspired by the work of other photographers working in this genre, like Cartier-Bresson, René Burri and Alex Webb. Before long I started posting my own images, and was getting really positive feedback and it snowballed from there.'

So what, for Craig, is the appeal of street photography over landscapes? 'I guess I'm fascinated by human



Craig Reilly is a London-based street photographer and a member of the Street Photography International Collective. See more of Craig's work at www.craigreillyphotography.com, streetphotographyinternational.com, and on Instagram @furby76

interaction – I'm a real people watcher – so capturing these fleeting moments really appeals to me. Trying to find the interesting in the mundane, and create artistic images from everyday life.'

Craig lives on the outskirts of London, so the capital is his stomping ground. As he says, 'I pretty much take the same routes all the time – the South Bank, St Pauls, the Barbican, Shoreditch, but I'll always end up at Tate Modern. It's such a giving place for photography. I'm interested in the geometry of the urban landscape. The shapes, the leading lines, the sharp edges – these are things I use a lot in my work.'

As Craig became more serious about his work he upgraded to the pro-spec Olympus OM-D E-M1 Mark II; a bit bigger than the E-M10 but still tiny by DSLR standards. Craig's kit now comprises the E-M1 Mark II plus three prime lenses.

'I only work with primes, and the Micro Four Thirds system has some

Craig's top three tips

● Don't delete your photos because there may be something you missed the first time around. I often go back and revisit my old pictures, see something and think 'How on earth did I miss this?'

● Study the work of other street photographers past and present and be inspired but find your own signature style.

● Take some time to think of the content and how it is ordered within the frame – use your bad shots as well as your successes to learn from. Study them and analyse why they didn't work. That's the best way to improve.

The capital is Craig's stomping ground. As this atmospheric shot taken at Tate Modern testifies

superb ones in the range. The 45mm in particular is such a sharp lens, great for portraits, though as a telephoto it's my least-used lens of the three. My go-to lens is the Voigtländer 25mm f/0.95. I shoot almost wide open with it, around f/1.4. It's manual focus only but I shoot fully in manual anyway – focusing and exposure, for which I often tend to use spot metering. I have my camera set up very simply.'

It is often said that the camera is just a tool but as any DIY enthusiast will know, the choice of tool can have a direct impact on the result. Although the E-M1 Mark II has a smaller sensor than Craig's DSLR he feels he is getting better pictures, technically as well as aesthetically.

Craig's kit

- Olympus OM-D E-M1 Mark II
- Olympus M.Zuiko 17mm f/1.8
- Voigtländer 25mm f/0.95
- Olympus M.Zuiko 45mm f/1.8



A keen eye certainly paid off in this shot



Craig takes time to find an interesting take on the mundane

The urban landscape lends itself to geometric shapes and patterns



Top features of the Olympus OM-D E-M1 Mark II

- The image quality, straight out of the camera, is better than I was getting on my DSLR.
- Lenses – between Olympus, Lumix, Leica, Voigtländer and others, in my opinion the Micro-Four Thirds system has the biggest range of really high-quality lenses of any system.
- The size and weight means it's discreet and isn't a burden to carry around.
- The vari-angle touchscreen, with touch shutter, enable me to take pictures I would struggle to get with my DSLR.
- It's completely customisable. You can assign almost any function to any button. You can set it up to suit your way of working.



Alexandre Rotenberg

Alexandre Rotenberg is a Brazilian travel photographer, currently based in Italy. He loves exploring new places, preferably on a bicycle, and capturing pictures that provoke a strong emotional response. Alexandre is the author of *The Brutally Honest Guide to Microstock Photography*. Visit brutallyhonestmicrostock.com.



ALL PICTURES © ALEXANDRE ROTENBERG

This premium image of vineyards in Barbaresco, Italy, is licensed exclusively as rights managed via a travel-specialist agency

Brutally honest guide to **microstock**

Succeeding as a microstock contributor is tough, but if you combine a strong work ethic with a commercial eye and an ability to spot a trend, there is still good money to be made, says **Alexandre Rotenberg**

KIT LIST



Nikon D800

The D800 has a powerful 36.3MB full-frame sensor, which works excellently in low-light situations. Some might consider it 'overkill' for shooting stock since most images are licensed as 72dpi and 4MB, which is easily attainable with a less expensive model, but I'm a big fan.



Sigma 24-70mm f/2.8

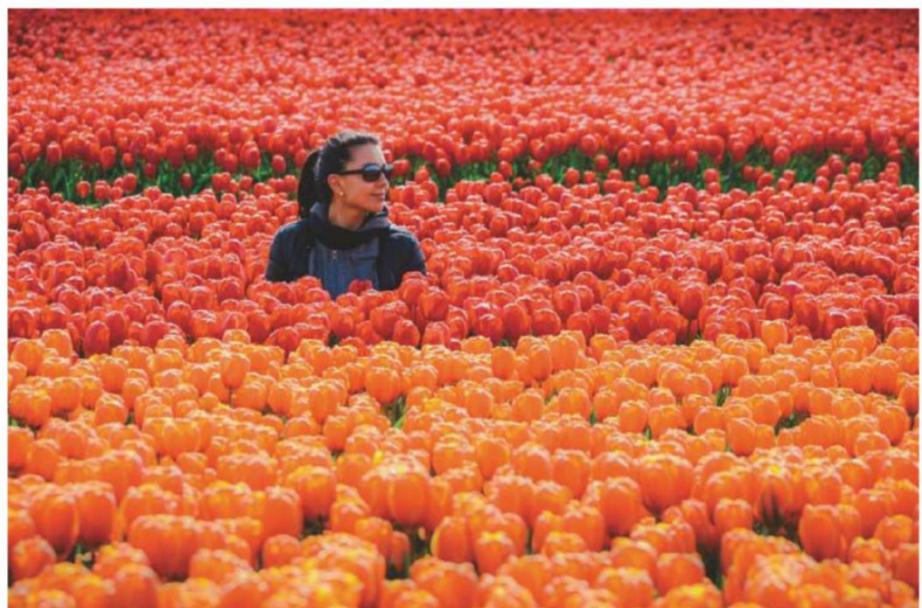
Costing almost half the equivalent of a Nikon lens, this lens offers an excellent focal range for landscape (24mm) right up to a moderate portrait range (70mm). The f/2.8 aperture is great for low light situations.





Photography might just be a hobby for some of you, but it's nice to earn cash from images that would otherwise be gathering digital dust. This extra income can be put towards photographic trips and/or upgrading equipment. The good news is that it is still possible to fund these activities by uploading your images to microstock agencies. Naturally, the market is tougher than it was a few years ago, but there are still plenty of ways to give your work an edge over the competition.

A stock agency maintains a library of images covering a wide array of subjects, and licenses these images to customers. Their customers desperately need



Tulip fields in the Netherlands. Combining your leisure time with your stock photography business is ideal

commercial stock images to persuade consumers to purchase products and/or services. Alternatively, some customers need editorial stock images, which are used to support non-commercial media. According to MDG Advertising, articles featuring images average 94% more views than those without.

Due to legal restrictions, these businesses cannot simply 'lift' a digital image to use (even though this occurs frequently), and it can be expensive to hire photographers to carry out commissioned work. This is where microstock agencies come in as they provide high-quality, royalty-free images to businesses and individuals, without the hefty price tag.

The barriers for amateur photographers to earn money from their images have come crashing down in the past 10 years thanks to high-quality DSLRs and, more recently, mobile phones with better resolution. This is a double-edged sword, as it has also made the microstock market extremely competitive, with only a small percentage of the most talented and hard working earning enough to cover their living costs.

Succeeding as a microstock contributor is tough, and if you're considering joining the ranks, it's advisable to be aware of some of the challenges. The microstock business model is not a get-rich-quick scheme. A new breed of contributor is required – one that combines the right

work ethic, a commercial eye, an ability to recognise an in-demand niche and, of course, natural talent. As the old saying goes, the cream rises to the top.

Licensing digital images

With stock photography, customers are granted the right to use certain images (intellectual property). Selling the use of these rights is known as licensing. A photographer licenses such intellectual property via an agency according to the usage needs of the customer. As the stock industry has evolved, two main licensing models have emerged: royalty free and rights managed.

Royalty free

Royalty-free licenses are the backbone of the microstock industry. A one-off fee is paid by the customer to use the image multiple times and for multiple purposes according to the license agreement. The price for the license usually depends on the image size, but is increasingly based on an agency's monthly subscription plan (eg \$100/month for a right to download a maximum of 25/images a day).

Rights managed

Rights-managed licenses require the end user to pay a licensing fee for a specific usage, such as location, type of media, length of usage and the option of

Nikon AF-S 50mm F/1.8 G

This is a must-have for portraits. It's light, compact, inexpensive and delivers beautiful bokeh. It also features Nikon's exclusive Silent Wave Motor (SWM) for near-silent operation.



Manfrotto 294 3-section carbon tripod

Weighing just 1.6kg, the carbon-weight is most welcome as I travel regularly by bicycle. It has two-position leg angle settings and can take a 5kg payload.



Neutral density filter

An ND filter is essential for achieving slower shutter speeds allowing you to blur moving objects such as traffic or people or water and clouds.



Nikon SB-900 F Speedlight

As well as full control over the intensity of light, this flash has advanced wireless abilities. Compatible with Nikon FX and DX format SLRs.



Commercial stock images are used to persuade consumers to purchase their products and/or services; in this case, a business may potentially use this model-released image to advertise a travel package

Exclusivity. The licensing of rights-managed images is standard practice at agencies that license more premium and curated content.

What to shoot

Agencies hire quality-control reviewers to ensure images are up to scratch, particularly in the areas of composition, lighting, low noise and grain, sharp focus on the subject, accurate use of captions and keywords. Failure to adhere to one or more of these criteria would almost certainly lead to a rejection (see below). In the beginning, rejections come thick and fast, but don't get frustrated – you need to see them as lessons on how to improve.

Microstock can be beautiful and glamorous, but most of the time it simply involves capturing mundane stuff in a way

that is interesting enough to appeal to a range of clients. To be commercial, pictures need to be unique, which means avoiding overdone subject matter, unless you have a fresh approach, including pets, flags, beaches, flowers, and popular landmarks.

Critics of microstock argue that some pictures look fake and cheesy – a group of smiling corporate types sitting around a meeting table, or a pretty customer-service girl wearing a headset, for example. It's a good idea to avoid such clichés. Nowadays, images that are licensed regularly often feature models acting in an 'authentic' way, which is not easy to capture. If you can 'fake' authenticity, you have made it.

For example, is a plumber coming round to fix your broken boiler? A technically excellent image of that boiler could pay for the cost of a new one and more, especially

if the image features the plumber (fully model-released, of course). Similarly, the next time you're enjoying a drink in a beautiful setting, take a few shots with an iconic feature in the background.

At first, you will probably submit images that are related to your hobbies and interests, which is fine while you are still getting to grips with the business model, improving technically, and developing your style. However, once your portfolio grows to a few hundred images, you will have more financial success if you choose to focus your energies on a few niches.

How much can you earn?

The microstock licensing model provides the means for serious enthusiasts to earn extra money from images that would otherwise sit on their hard drives. But the bar is set so high that many contributors become disillusioned and quit within a few months. The reality is that the financial rewards from your hard work are unlikely to be much at first. In my book, I outline a case study of an average hard-working contributor over a two-year period. At the end of the two years, the contributor has 1,500 quality images spread out over multiple top agencies; accumulated gross revenue of \$2,700; amassed revenue of just over \$200/month at the 23rd month, which should keep generating more or less that amount monthly for some time, although images do tend to have a life cycle. Before giving microstock a go, experiment with different revenue scenarios using the Microstock Business Plan Calculator at www.stockperformer.com/calculator.

There are many intangibles involved, including market forces and changing keyword algorithms, but the scenario outlined above gives you an idea of the scalability of the microstock model.

AP

AVOIDING REJECTION



Lighting

Reason for rejection: The highlights are overexposed and/or there is a loss of detail in shadows or highlights. Solution: It's not possible to recover the highlights without major post-processing work, so one solution is to crop out the parts that are causing the rejection.

Focus

Reason for rejection: Unintentional blur either caused by lack of focus, motion, or poor lens quality. Solution: Focus issues are the kiss of death, and are extremely difficult to fix. Try to get it right in camera and after shooting check your shot at 100%. If it looks soft, re-shoot it.

Composition

Reason for rejection: An issue with the framing or placement of the elements that limits its commercial or editorial usefulness. Solution: Cropping won't necessarily solve this issue. Shoot wider than usual, ensuring plenty of space for end users to potentially insert text.

Which microstock agency to use

THERE are numerous microstock agencies to choose from and new ones are emerging all the time, so how do you decide where to upload your pictures? To make life easier, on the right is a list of the major 30 microstock agencies and how much commission contributors may earn (correct as of mid-2017).

Unfortunately, some of the agencies listed here are probably not worth your while as they have too little traffic, which is likely to mean few royalties. Some contributors choose to upload to literally all of the microstock agencies, which can be very time consuming. Fortunately, you can get software, such as Stocksubmitter, to assist in this task. As a starting point, I recommend uploading to a few of the top-tier agencies, including the likes of Alamy, Adobe Stock/Fotolia, and Shutterstock.



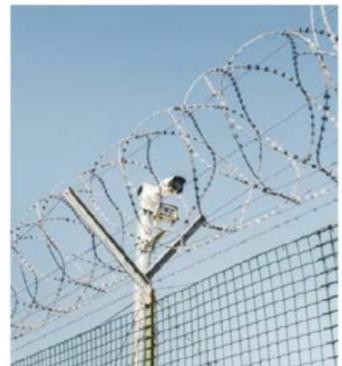
Enjoying an aperol spritz while overlooking Piazza Duomo in Milan

AGENCIES	COMMISSION*
123RF	30-60%
500px	30%
Alamy	50%
	If directly through Alamy and an additional 30% if through a 3rd party within its distribution network
Adobe Stock / Fotolia	33%
Bigstockphoto	\$0.50
	Per credit or 30% per Partner Program
Canstockphoto	50%
Canva	35%
Clipdealer	46%
	Of the net sale
Cliparto	40%-50%
Colourbox	20%
Crestock	20%
	25% after the first 250 downloads, up to 40% at 10,000
Cutcaster	40%
Dreamstime	20%-45%
	Depending on your level
Depositphotos	34%-42%
Foap	50%
GL Stock Images	52%
iStockphoto (Getty Images)	15%
Panther Media	30%-50%
Pond5	50%
Photodune / Envato	36%
Photocase	40%-60%
	Depending on your current share level
Photospin	40%
Pixta	22%-42%
Pixoto	30%
Scandinavian Stock Photo	50%
Shutterstock	Depending on the specific type of subscription and license usage but usually 24 cents - 36 cents per image downloaded
Signelements	30%
Stockfresh	50%-62.5%
Twenty20	20%
Yayimages	50%

* On non-exclusive downloads, % of license purchase price.
Range generally depends on contributor level



Brexit is a trending topic and will remain so for years to come



A clear concept surrounding issues of security, borders and dystopia

Find a profitable niche

THERE are three main keys to finding a profitable niche within microstock, and they should all be addressed simultaneously.

1 Images should reflect visual trends

Most agencies go to great lengths to inform contributors of current visual trends. This information is compiled from vast amounts of data from their customers' search and download activities. But your thoughts should also be directed towards anticipating future trends. These may include themes around wearable technology, cutting-edge research, virtual reality, automation, cyber security and terrorism, challenging stereotypes, etc.

2 There should be a limited supply of such images

Think of a trending concept and

list a few key words you believe end-users might use in a search themselves. You may notice that very few high-quality images show up on the search results, since these are difficult images to obtain. You could consider emulating an airport security set-up (model-released) with models of both sexes, different ages and ethnic groups. (If you choose to shoot these images at airports and submit them as editorials, you do so at your own risk!)

3 You should enjoy shooting these types of images

Does capturing certain types of image make you feel 'in the moment', when time just flies by? The chances are if you enjoy capturing the subject, you will produce higher quality images.



Dust spots on sensor

Reason for rejection: Dust is visible in sky or when image is inspected at 100%. Solution: Change your lenses in a clean environment. If you find dust spots, take your camera to be professionally cleaned. Or remove dust spots in post-processing.



BEFORE



AFTER

Noise

Reason for rejection: Noise is visible due to over-sharpening, film grain, dust, improper exposure, insufficient light. Solution: Rejections may be due to improper exposure, high ISO, inferior body and/or lens. To deal with this use moderate noise reduction in post-processing.



Model release

Reason for rejection: Your image features identifiable people and/or trademarks. Solution: Remove (clone/blur) identifiable people or any clues that relate to a brand. If none of this is possible, and you haven't obtained property/model releases, submit the image as 'editorial'.

My top five highest-grossing stock images

NOW THAT you have identified the best stock agencies to target with your images, have a rough idea of how much you're likely to earn, and have a better understanding of the technical requirements, which types of images are likely to continue selling for years to come? It's a difficult question to answer, but once you have a significant portfolio spread out at various sites you will generate most of your income from a small percentage of your pictures. This is likely to be in line with the Pareto Principle, so you would earn 80%

of your revenue from 20% of your images. The beauty of the microstock business model is that such high-grossing images should continue to sell for years to come. The key is to produce images that rank highly for popular keywords and simply produce more of these types of shots.

To give you an idea of which types of images are popular, here are five of my highest-grossing images at Shutterstock, along with the number of downloads of each image. I've given reasons as to why they continue to be

licensed regularly. Despite the varied subject matter, the pictures all have a few things in common: they are technically excellent (focus, lighting, composition etc); they were shot in colour (which tends to be more versatile than black & white); each one has a clearly identifiable theme/message; the level of post-processing is just right; they provoke a powerful emotional response in the viewer; the shots capture an inspirational place/time; and they illustrate 'trending' themes with high-ranking, popular keywords.

1 A powerful moment in the midst of the refugee crisis in Budapest, Hungary. A young girl holds up an 'SOS' sign while fellow refugees create an interesting frame. Even though this editorial image and slight variations were captured in 2014, they continue to be licensed regularly, as the refugee crisis in Europe, unfortunately, has no end in sight.



2 These beautiful arches in Rio de Janeiro's botanical gardens draw you in, with a beautiful soft, tropical light. The picture has been licensed for all sorts of media from postcards to wedding blogs and, of course, blogs about travel to Rio/Brazil.



3 Most images of Rotterdam Centraal train station in the Netherlands tend to be captured at street level, making this angle more unusual. In addition, the image has a futuristic feel. Rotterdam is a hub for import/export business, with Europe's largest port, and as a result this image features heavily in business-related websites and blogs.



4 This is a hugely versatile commercial image about a popular subject (travel), featuring interesting lighting and composition. This type of shot is increasingly difficult to obtain due to tighter security, even with long lenses. In this image, I cloned out all of the logos so it could be licensed commercially.



5 Backdrop of Ipanema in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, captured a year before the 2016 Olympics. This image has been licensed regularly on ads/blogs about Rio and Brazil as well as blogs/ads about cocktails.





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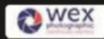
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Microstock success

Yuri Arcurs is the highest earning stock photographer in the world. We find out why



Yuri Arcurs

Yuri Arcurs nets more than \$6 million a year in royalties. He is based in Cape Town, South Africa where he runs his company PeopleImages, which operates out of a 1,200m² studio with approximately 70 staff.

See www.peopleimages.com.

How many sales were you making at the height of your business?

Between five and six thousand a day, which is roughly a sale every four seconds.

In 2013 you pulled all of your images off micro stock sites, why?

I was concerned that there were no efforts in the industry to push prices up and therefore I partnered with Getty and iStock for that reason. Policies on the agencies had become a race to the bottom and I knew I had to disrupt it to create a segment in the industry where we could still get top prices. The plan worked and roughly 40% of our income comes from the high-tier segment, which is equivalent to the same drop we experienced prior to moving.

Is it still possible to make a living from microstock?

In today's market, it is reserved for the very best photographers that already have a major bankroll to finance production. If you were in the mid-range tier you would be able to get roughly \$1,000 royalty from 1,000 files. This would take you a half a year full time, assuming you are just entering the market. It will cost you probably \$25-30,000 to do, which means the return on investment is roughly two to three years.

How do you think stock photography is evolving?

It used to be seen as sub-level photography, but through competition and globalisation it has turned out to be one of the most competitive and high-quality segments.

What is the impact of mobile-phone photography on the market?

As a commercial tool for providing stock photography the phone is not good. However, for citizen journalism, Instagram, selfies and authentic-type stuff it is probably the best tool.

How many images do you think it takes to earn a decent income?

You would need to earn approximately \$5,000 a month to live a normal life in the Western world to cover minimum production and gear investment. It would take you two to two-and-a-half years if you are a mid-tier photographer. A high-tier photographer can be entirely different. My wife Cecilie Skjold Johanse, trained by me, has a return of roughly \$20,000 a month on roughly 4,000 images.

What makes a saleable image?

A great selling shoot takes the customer's perspective entirely. To be a really good stock photographer you have to understand stock images and be quite good with design and aesthetics. You have to understand how an image is used.



This is an example of how authenticity can make such a successful shot

Is it more profitable to find a niche?

You have to find a niche. The most competitive subject to shoot are single females in their mid-20s. That would be the dumbest idea to start shooting this too, because you are competing against



Another successful image – this is entirely constructed with models, stylist, make-up artist and a fake office



© PAUL MILLS/SC

20% of the entire subject matter on stock photography sites. You need to shoot things you have specialised knowledge of. That way, you can move into a very competitive area where you will only be up against two to three stock photographers with the same interests, and not 200,000 stock photographers globally.

There used to be a belief that people 'dumped' inferior images on microstock sites; is this still the case?
Not today because it would be pointless. You wouldn't earn anything from it and you would have to spend all your own time uploading, key wording, categorising and attaching model releases.

There's a big demand for 'authentic' images – what does this mean exactly and why do you think this is the case?
I think it's because they are the hardest to create, it is where journalism meets commercial photography. The key is to find beauty in ordinary people in ordinary situations through your camera. Luckily, this type of shooting is very fulfilling and you get to engage with people on a different level.

What visual trends do you anticipate seeing in the next few years?

Five years ago, the most common trend, that then became a bit over-used, was cross processing. Then everybody started loving flare and now I see the current trend is 'authenticity through aesthetics'. Authentic images on their own generally tend to look ugly but if you find a way to make them aesthetic, they are in high demand. Customers are tired of the classic stock look and want real people in real situations.

Please describe a picture that has been particularly lucrative for you.

A particularly successful image (see above) that has sold for more than \$4,000, was a shoot heavily inspired by a real-life experience when we launched our own stock site peopleimages.com. I was inspired by the way IT teams work through the night. Some of the people in the picture are the programmers on my IT team. It may not be particularly aesthetic but it is definitely authentic, and people that have experience working with IT will most likely relate to such an image.

What subjects should people be shooting right now?

Political correctness has really gained momentum over the last year; there's a huge market for bloggers, feminists and environmentalists. A very under-represented subject but a high-selling one. It is a growing trend, and if you're a good stock photographer you ought to capitalise on it.

Do you have any tips for keywording your images?

Yes, I do. Don't do it yourself, get all the help you can get. Currently the best tool is on qhero.com, which is a mass-distribution portal to get images online to iStock fast.

Where is the best place to sell microstock images? Should photographers use multiple agencies?

I would strongly recommend being exclusively iStock, and using qhero.com makes it even easier to upload to iStock – it is definitely the way to go. Alternatively, you would have to submit to all the other agencies to get the same income or higher, which is a pain.



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A day in the life of a fashion photographer

With London Fashion Week about to start, we find out what it's like to be a top fashion photographer, as **Amanda Thomas** talks about her typical day



I'm a fashion and portrait photographer. I love working with sustainable fashion brands, using exceptional photography to create and elevate an emotional connection with style and purpose. A typical client for me is a fashion or lifestyle brand like Natural Spa Factory, which produces gender-neutral skincare, and Seven Boot Lane, an independent footwear brand. I also shoot portraits, in which it's important to capture the essence of the person in the brief window of time I have. I recently worked with an amazing creative director who commissioned me for a series of portraits of her, for

her various projects. It was a fun and liberating shoot.

Planning ahead

Before a shoot the client and I discuss ideas and what they would like to achieve. Once the look, feel and theme of the shoot is agreed, a mood board is made up by either me, the client or the art director. From this we can direct and commission the fashion stylist and make-up artist, and other crewmembers needed such as a nail technician, a hairstylist, and possibly a location/production manager who would source a location and fix the shooting permits. As soon as I get the

Above: Seven Boot Lane Autumn/Winter 2017 campaign lookbook

go-ahead from the client, I start booking the make-up artist, hair stylist, fashion stylist and any assistants.

The planning can be any time between two months to two weeks before the shoot. It can vary due to the time scales of seasonal changes and the client's schedule. From my experience, the longer I have to plan a shoot, the smoother the day runs, as there is more time to consider the running order of shots and counteract any foreseeable errors.

On one of my recent shoots I had a videographer filming the shoot, the models, and capturing behind the scenes while also shooting the products, so it was an involved day.



Amanda Thomas

Amanda Thomas is an established fashion and portrait photographer working out of London and Bristol. Her specialisms are fashion, portraits and lifestyle, and for 19 years she has worked directly with agency and publishing creative directors to produce elegant and striking images. Her clients include Neal's Yard and Natural Spa Factory. Visit www.amandathomasphotographer.co.uk.

Top tips shooting

- 1** Always shoot tethered to a laptop. This makes working easier, as you can view the images on a bigger screen as you go, and you will know instantly if you need to make changes. Stopping to crowd around the screen on the back of the camera slows you down and breaks contact with your model.
- 2** Shoot various crops of the model. This gives you more flexibility and allows you to pin a variety of images together to create a story. If everything is shot really tight to the face, or wide, then it limits your choices in the final edit and can make it difficult to pull together.
- 3** Direct your model. Professional models know how to work a camera, but they still need guidance and directing. Maintain eye contact, conversation and give encouragement to coax the best from them. Give them direction so they don't look posed or static.
- 4** Don't over-shoot. Shooting too many of the same images can make for an exhausting shoot and edit. If you have 500 frames of the same model in the same pose and the same outfit it gets boring, the model will fade and it will show.
- 5** Experiment with new kit. It can be easy to use your regular kit and do the same lighting set up over and over again, but by trying new kit or lighting rig will open up new ideas and possibilities to shooting. It will help keep your work looking fresh.



Seven Boot Lane
is a boutique
footwear brand

Typical time frame before and during the shoot

Two weeks before: I send out the mood board if I haven't done so already and double-check that the team have all the information needed.

The week before: I check with the client to see if there are any changes. I send out a 'call sheet', which has all the shoot and team details. It has everyone's name and phone number, the location address, start time, finish time and emergency phone numbers in case of breakdowns or delays – because life doesn't always run to plan!

The day before: I have another quick check-in with everyone to make sure everything is on schedule.

On the day: One shoot was a particularly early start! I had to pick up the fashion stylist and then drive to London for an 8am arrival. We had an hour to prep and get ready for arrival of the models and client. Once everyone is on set, the running order of shots is discussed, the mood board is pinned up and I hold a quick meeting with the team so everyone knows what to expect.

London Fashion Week will be held on 21-24 September at The Store Studios, 180 Strand, London WC2R 1EA. Tickets are available from around £21. Visit londonfashionweekfestival.com.

Shine on

It's a flashgun, it's a continuous light source, and it's going to revolutionise on-camera lighting. Meet the **Rotolight NEO 2**

British lighting manufacturer Rotolight has just hammered a nail into the coffin for hot-shoe flashguns with the launch of the NEO 2, a portable camera-mountable light offering both continuous lighting and high speed sync flash (HSS).

Aimed squarely at both stills photographers and videographers, the NEO 2 offers a host of world firsts. It is the first hotshoe mount flash with dial-in colour temperature adjustment, enabling users to balance the NEO 2's output precisely to the ambient lighting, or the camera's WB settings, using the built-in kelvin display.

Unlike conventional flashguns the NEO 2 has no recycle time, so you can use it with your camera's high speed burst mode, at shutter speeds up to 1/8,000sec, and it will fire continuously without missing a shot. No need to worry about running out of juice, either. Thanks to the relatively lower power consumption of LEDs compared with Xenon flash tubes, the NEO 2 offers unprecedented battery life, boasting around 85,000 full power flashes from a single set of AA batteries – compared with an average of 200 from most speedlights.

Continuous light source

Using standard flashguns it can be difficult to visualise the lighting effect you're going to get with your light without doing a few test shots first and reviewing the results. In low-light situations focusing can also be a challenge. These problems are a thing of the past with the NEO 2, thanks to the fact that it is also a continuous light source. This

You can dial in a precise colour temperature for both flash or continuous light

enables you to see exactly the effect of the modelling on your subject before you shoot, and also means you can adjust the colour temperature by eye if you want to. In low light the continuous light source makes focusing the lens much easier, and means your subject isn't blinded by a bright flash when their pupils are wide open (which should also make

© JASON LAMBERT

The NEO 2 produces natural looking skin tones and attractive catchlights



The NEO 2 incorporates Elinchrom's highly regarded Skyport technology so can synchronise up to ten NEO 2 lights, wirelessly



redeye a non-issue). Of course, having the continuous light mode means that you may not have to use the flash at all – but if you do need that extra power, then switching from continuous mode to flash mode increases the output brightness of the NEO 2 by a whopping 500%.

Wireless control

Although the NEO 2 can be mounted on your camera's hotshoe we all know that from a light quality point of view this isn't generally the best place to put your light, but off-camera flash with conventional flashguns can be complex and often requires the purchase of additional accessories. For the NEO 2, Rotolight collaborated with

The Rotolight NEO 2 can be mounted on your camera's hotshoe



Elinchrom to incorporate its highly regarded Skyport 2.4Ghz HSS wireless flash receiver into the unit. This enables users to wirelessly control up to 10 NEO 2 lights, in four groups at up to 200m (656ft) with the new Rotolight HSS transmitter, optimised for Rotolight by Elinchrom. (Available for Canon, Nikon, Olympus, Panasonic and Sony, with Fujifilm coming soon).

If you're one of the growing band of photographers who also shoot video you'll be pleased to learn that the NEO 2 is 85% brighter in continuous mode than its predecessor. Rotolight has also updated its suite of CineSFX effects, which offer film makers a selection of pre-programmed lighting effects. These include simulations of lightning, a flickering TV, a

fireplace, and a police siren, and a host of other effects.

Whether shooting stills or video, the NEO 2 is a great light for faces – its colour rendition delivers perfect skin tones, and the shape of the light itself produces attractive circular catchlights.

The NEO 2 can be purchased as a single light, in a kit which also includes a power supply, belt pouch, accessory shoe and four-piece filter pack for £299.99. Or three-light kit with hard flight case, stands and ball heads (£1,349.99) 'The NEO 2 is a game-changer. There's genuinely no recycle time, you'll never miss a shot,' says Jason Lanier, Sony Artisan of Imagery.

NEO 2 is available to preorder now from www.rotolight.com, shipping in September 2017.

Top of the form

Tony Sellen, who's won plaudits in both the EISA Maestro and APOY competitions, discusses his minimalist approach

When did you first become interested in photography?

I bought my first DSLR back in 2009, but I don't think I really got into photography seriously until 2014. In those first five years of owning a DSLR it was really an on/off hobby where I'd go months without touching the camera, yet I would learn something new every time I did pick it up. Then, in 2014, I decided to start taking it more seriously. I did a workshop with the talented Vulture Labs (www.vulturelabs.photography) at the end of 2014, and then I was really hooked. Since then, I've been taking my camera everywhere I go and, as a result, I shoot most weeks.

Why do you like black & white?

Black & white for me is timeless; it's

a style that will never go out of fashion. I believe architecture and street photography really suit black & white processing, and they just happen to be the two genres that I frequently shoot.

What is it about long exposures that you love?

Long-exposure photography allows you to be creative, taking a scene and making it your own. Whether it's smoothing out water or turning fluffy clouds into sleek streaks across the sky, it's a look that you can't see without using the long-exposure process.

Have you dabbled in any other genres of photography?

I do enjoy wildlife photography and I'm always drawn to good



Left: After reading an interesting article by Joel Tjintjelaar on split toning I thought I'd give it a go
Nikon D810, 25mm, 396sec at f/8, ISO 100

photographs of animals. I've been on safari and I've taken photos of birds while I was learning. But when you're living in the city, wildlife is a genre that is hard to maintain interest in.

What is your go-to kit?

I've always used Nikon cameras and I currently have a Nikon D810 and an infrared converted D7000. I only use prime lenses now, which means the bag is a lot heavier, but I think the fixed focal length helps you improve as a photographer. My 25mm and 50mm lenses tend to go everywhere with me. I find the 50mm is ideal for street photography and the 25mm is perfect for architecture and cityscapes. I've also got a good set of ND filters that I use for my long exposures, along with a couple of grads.



'I find the 50mm is ideal for street photography and the 25mm is perfect for architecture'

Can you explain your typical long-exposure technique?

With long-exposure photography I first set up a composition just holding the camera. Once I find that I have roughly what I want, I set the camera up on the tripod and concentrate on getting the framing exactly right. I manually focus in live view and then plug the remote in and cover the eyepiece. I have the camera set to aperture priority mode at the start. I adjust the aperture to try to achieve a shutter speed of about 1/250sec. From here, I know what my exposure time will be, although I must say there are many phone apps available that will do the calculation for you. Next, it's time to put on the ND filter. There

are many types of filters, and I use Formatt-Hitech screw-on range. The camera then needs to go into manual and/or bulb mode to set the correct exposure time.

How often do you get a chance to go out and shoot?

Last year I managed to get out at least once a week. It's not been quite as frequent this year, but I've been on quite a few trips where I have spent several days taking photographs, so it's possible I have taken more photographs this year than I did last year. I've usually got my camera with me, so even if I haven't planned to go out shooting, I've always got the option to take a few shots.

What is your favourite time of day and locations to shoot?

I don't like busy locations, so I tend to try to avoid busy times of day. A stroll around London on a Sunday shooting some street and architecture is always nice. Trips to Venice and Iceland in the winter were cold, but all the good locations were not as busy as they would have been at peak tourism times.

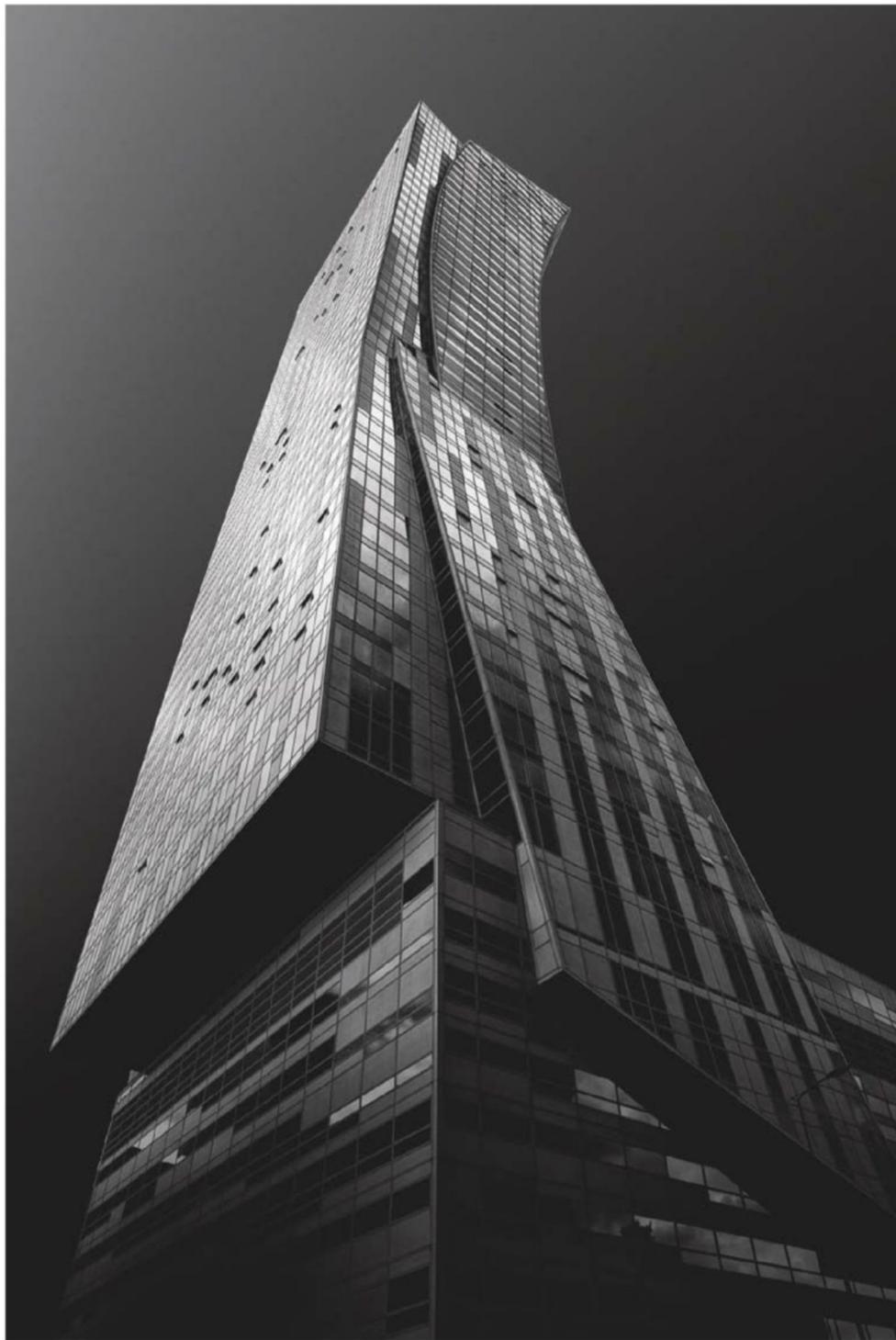
What post-production software do you use?

I use Lightroom and Silver Efex Pro for most of my post-production work. During the past year I've also started adding Photoshop to my workflow.

Do you tend to apply the same adjustments in post-production?

I always try to go for the same style throughout most of my

Above: This is a new residential building in London. It has some interesting shapes, which caught my attention right away
Nikon D810, 20mm, 1/500sec at f/8, ISO 100



Above: This is such an unusual building with its curved structure and sloping sides. It really stands out in the Warsaw skyline catching the light so well
Nikon D810, 20mm, 1/250sec at f/9, ISO 80

photographs. Yet, I don't have any presets saved and start every process from scratch. While I want the same style, every photo needs different treatment.

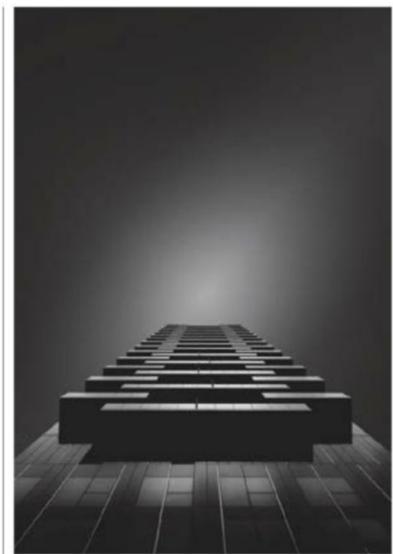
Do you have any big projects you're currently working on?

I've never been one for projects. Last year I entered the Wex Photographic weekly social media competition #WexMondays every week. This was a project of some sorts, having to take a different photo every week throughout the

year. It was quite a challenge to produce a good shot each and every week. I'm currently trying to get a different photograph from a different country each month. I may have to bend my own rules a little on this, but it's not going too badly at the moment.

Do you have a dream location you'd like to shoot at?

The list of locations to go and shoot is a list that gets longer and longer. Places like New York, Chicago and Paris would be great cities



Above: This shot is called 'Step on Up' and gives a unique architectural view
Nikon D810, 25mm, 1/320sec at f/8, ISO 250



Above: This shot was taken on the new underground line in Warsaw
Nikon D810, 20mm, 1/80sec at f/7.1, ISO 1600



Above: This fantastic little house surrounded by water was taken in Venice
Nikon D810, 18mm, 25sec at f/6.3, ISO 100

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'I'd say a small strong portfolio is much better than a large weak one; a good portfolio takes time'

➤ to visit, and are high up on my list, as are more remote places such as Japan and the Faroe Islands. I'm hopeful that I'll get the chance to go to some, if not all of them.

What attracts you to a scene?
Shapes and leading lines are always good places to start when looking for a good composition. Nice clean lines in architecture always draw my attention, and if this can be incorporated into street photography too then even better.

How do you feel about being the British winner of the 2017 EISA Maestro competition and second overall?

I was thrilled to have won the British leg of the competition. Having seen the other photographs that were entered, I really thought it was quite an achievement, especially with it being a portfolio-based competition. When I went up against the winners from 14 other countries for the overall competition, I never expected to

do so well by finishing second. I'm so pleased to have placed in such a big competition.

You've also entered our competition, APOY, on Photocrowd. How important are competitions to you in terms of raising your profile and helping your photography?

It's a good way of gauging how good your work is, but you shouldn't read too much into it. Winners are often one person's or a small group's collective opinion. It's always nice to do well, of course, but you shouldn't get too upset if you don't.

What advice would you give someone when creating a series/portfolio of cohesive shots?

I'd say a small strong portfolio is better than a large weak one, and a good portfolio takes time to achieve, so don't expect it to happen overnight. Try to have a style – if your photographs can be recognised without your name next to them, you're doing something right.



Above top: Berlin Cathedral sat next to the Spree gave a dreamy reflection
Nikon D810, 25mm, 52sec at f/11, ISO 64

Above: The Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park with low cloud and its active volcano smoking
Nikon D810, 50mm, 1/80sec at f/3.2, ISO 500

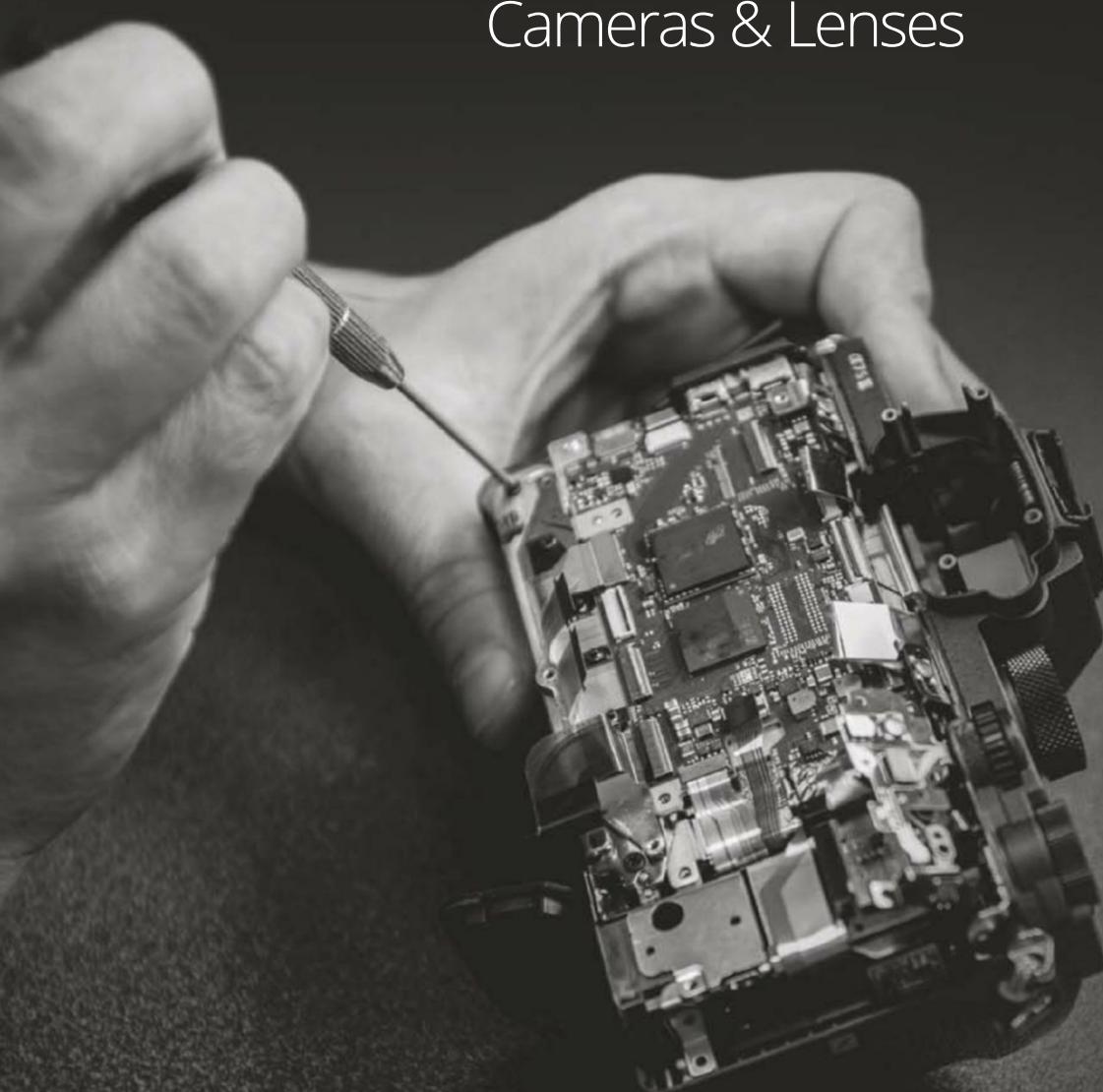


Tony Sellen is a self-taught photographer shooting with Nikon FX and DX cameras. He is passionate about fine-art, long-exposure images and, as he is based in London, the

City is where he finds most of his inspiration. You can see more of his work on his website www.londonfineartphotography.co.uk, on Instagram @ts446photo and his recently launched Facebook page www.facebook.com/londonfineartphotography.

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The judges were
(l to r) Gray Levett,
Dame Esther Rantzen
and AP Editor
Nigel Atherton



Sterling shots

AP teamed up with **The Silver Line** charity to ask for positive images of older people. Here's a selection of our favourites

Congratulations must go to Deborah Brown of Jersey, who won first prize with a delightful image of her mother-in-law. Peter Murrell came second with a candid image taken during a shopping trip with his wife, while Hayley Lehmann took third prize with a charming portrait of an elderly lady that she has befriended. Here's what they won:

1st prize

- Nikon D3400 DSLR
- 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6G VR DX lens
- 55-300mm f/4.5-5.6G VR lens
- Hawkesmill Jermyn Street bag
- 1 year of *Nikon Owner* magazine

2nd and 3rd prizes

- Nikon 1 J5 with 10-30mm lens
- ThinkTank Retrospective 5 bag
- 1 year of *Nikon Owner* magazine





1st

The winners

1st: Deborah Brown, Jersey

This is my mother-in-law, Mary, and her best friend Jean at the Normandy Landing beaches. Mary is riding the motorcycle in the museum exhibit.

She was in the WAAF and used to operate the barrage balloons in the war. What a character, and full of energy for an octogenarian. **Canon IXUS 500, 1/160sec at f/8**

2nd: Peter Murrell, London

This photo was taken in a London department store whilst I was out shopping with my wife. I was inspired by the lady's graceful and classy appearance. It was taken from the hip, so I was very pleased to get a decent result. I call this picture 'Don't stop till you get enough'! **Nikon D300s, 50mm lens, 1/60sec at f/5**

3rd: Hayley Lehmann, Barnet

This is Joyce, a spinster whom I have visited every day for the last three years, doing a seated version of the 'hokey cokey'. She is the most cheerful person I know, despite being virtually housebound. Joyce is four days younger than the Queen, and I love the image of the Queen on the newspaper, seemingly biting her lip at Joyce's antics. For me, Joyce embodies both the ordinary and the extraordinary. **Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 50mm f/1.2L USM, 1/40sec at f/8, lit with an Elinchrom studio light bounced into a white translucent umbrella**



2nd



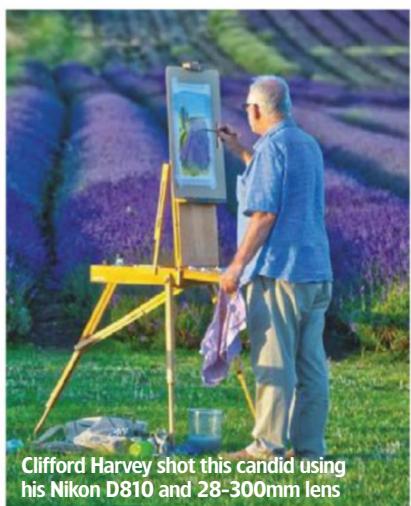
3rd

The best of the rest...



Leon Symons, of Maldon in Essex took this on a Samsung Galaxy superzoom compact

As a teenager in the ATC David Choppin, now 81, often flew in Tiger Moths, so for his birthday his family arranged a flight in one. Son Greg took the photo



Clifford Harvey shot this candid using his Nikon D810 and 28-300mm lens



Glasgow-based Harvinder Sunila took this portrait using a 20mm lens on his Panasonic GF1

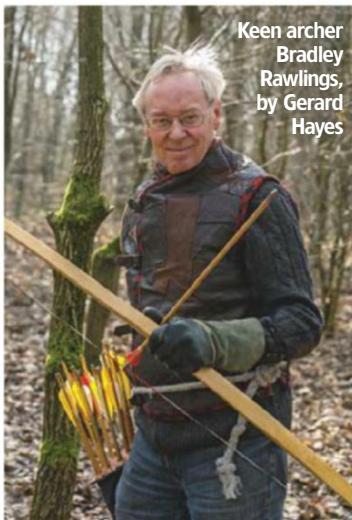
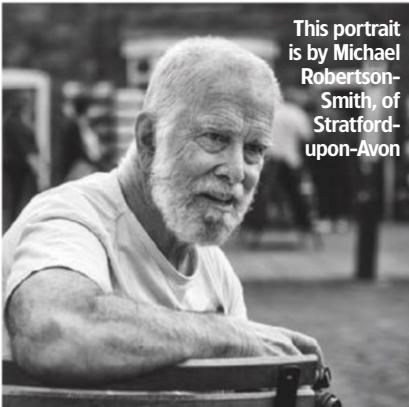
This is Captain Jerry Yellin of the US Army, who was there for the last casualty of World War II. Taken by Mitchell Fransen of Illinois, USA



Lorraine Poole of Hampshire took this portrait of Ben Pealing, a potter in Lyme Regis, Dorset



Dr Jack Daniels, 83, sports scientist and Olympian. Taken on a Fujifilm X-T10 by Dan Purdue



The Silver Line

helpline for older people

Tel 0800 4 70 80 90 or visit
www.thesilverline.org.uk



FOUNDED by Dame Esther Rantzen (left), The Silver Line is the UK's only free 24-hour helpline, offering information, friendship and advice to older people. Dame Esther says: 'The most revealing question we ask when we suspect that a caller is isolated or lonely is: "When is the last time you had fun?" We think everyone has the right to have fun, so if you visit our helpline or listen in to our group calls, the sound you will hear is laughter.' The Silver Line has trained around 3,000 volunteers. To find out about volunteering or to make a donation, visit www.thesilverline.org.uk.

Grays of Westminster



THE PRIZES for The Silver Line competition were generously donated by Grays of Westminster. Grays is well known around the world for its unique stock and unrivalled customer service, and as a centre of excellence for all things Nikon. Grays has won numerous awards and distinctions and is the first camera shop in the world to be granted its own Coat of Arms by Her Majesty's College of Arms. For more information, visit www.graysofwestminster.co.uk or visit the shop at 40 Churton Street, London SW1V 2LP.

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Small is beautiful

Photo opportunities abound at small gigs. Two experienced band photographers share their tips for memorable images with **Geoff Harris**



Trudi employs a wide aperture and higher ISO to nail the dynamic live show of Stacie Collins & the Al-Mighty 3
Nikon D600, 14-24mm, 1/160sec at f/3.5, ISO 3200

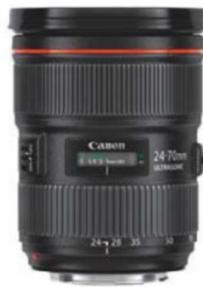
© TRUDI KNIGHT

KIT LIST



Full-frame SLR

Workhorse full-frame SLRs such as the Nikon D750/810 and Canon EOS 5D Mark III/IV remain popular with gig photographers owing to their detailed raw files and superior high ISO performance, but higher-end mirrorless cameras are catching on too.



Fast zoom lenses

The standard lens combo for many gig photographers is a 24-70mm and 70-200mm f/2.8, but some prefer wider glass. 'I use a 14-24mm f/2.8 wherever possible,' says Knight. 'I am always looking for interesting interactions between band members, and I like using a wideangle lens.'





◀ Camera harnesses

You don't want to miss a great shot as you are fumbling around changing lenses. Many seasoned pros will have two camera bodies attached to a harness – one body usually has a longer telephoto lens attached.



◀ Specialist lenses

It's not all about fast zooms. Leading rock photographer John McMurtrie sometimes uses fish-eye lenses for shots of both the band and crowd, for example. These tend to work better in bigger venues.

Trudi Knight

Trudi Knight is a well-known international gig photographer based in London, whose photos have been featured in the artwork for 30 CD/DVD/EP releases to date, as well as extensively in band merchandising. See www.bandsonstage.co.uk.

A lot of AP readers will be music fans, and photographing a gig or festival can be a great way of combining two passions. Sadly, however nice it would be to get a photo pass – right down in front of the band, with no beer-swilling giants spoiling your shot – you're unlikely to get one for a major act just because you really like them and want to build your portfolio. A more realistic option is to build your skills by shooting less well-known bands, who are often eager for publicity images – and who knows, that less well-known band might become very well known one day.

While shooting a band in a smaller, friendlier venue can be a lot of fun, it's also demanding. According to leading gig photographer Trudi Knight, the biggest challenge of shooting bands in smaller venues is uneven low lighting, or none at all. 'I remember a small gig in Hoxton years ago where literally the only light reaching the band was from a fire exit sign above a door, and a street light outside,' she explains. 'Poor lighting is very common, and the first thing you will need to learn to overcome, along with cramped stages where there may be no angle or position in which your view isn't blocked to some extent by stage furniture, like mics and monitors.'

No pit is not the pits

Generally Knight has found smaller/independent venues to be a lot more relaxed about cameras, and reckons that most venue security take their cue from the band's instructions anyway. 'I can't think of many occasions in a less-than-200-capacity venue that I've encountered significant problems. I don't leave it to chance though and will check in advance.'

So that's good news, and what's more, the lack of a dedicated 'photographer's pit' found in bigger venues can actually be an advantage, Knight reckons. 'The main pro is that no pit means that the show will be up close and personal, and you can get right in the middle of the action. No artificial barrier between the band and the audience usually makes for a better atmosphere, and there's also a lot of potential for getting shots of good interaction between the two. The main con is that finding a good spot can be problematic, especially if the place is rammed and there's not much scope for movement.'

As many readers will know, the use of flash is frowned upon at most concerts as it can be a distraction, so most gig photographers get by with fast, wide-aperture lenses and higher ISOs. Knight's approach is typical. 'I'm not scared of noise, and with the camera bodies I use now, I will happily shoot at ISO 6400 if it makes sense (though I always adjust ISO, aperture and shutter speed manually as I go). High ISO performance has improved drastically in the past decade, and noise reduction software has also come on in leaps and bounds.' You also need to be comfortable

'Be prepared – learn to see the action coming and look for clues in body language'

taking control of autofocus and shutter speed. 'I actually switched to back button AF a few years ago, as I found it a lot more logical – it takes away the frustration of accidentally refocusing at the wrong moment. With more active bands I like to be around the 1/160 mark if possible, though I can handhold down to 1/60th fairly comfortably if band members aren't running around, or if I have something to steady myself against. If I'm going for a jump shot I will often also use panning if the shutter speed needs to be on the lower side, to try to retain sharpness where it's most needed.'

Another big skill is preparation and anticipation, particularly when it comes to bagging those prized action shots. 'In terms of being prepared, it's imperative to learn to see the action coming and look for clues in body language, and this gets easier with experience. I always try to keep both eyes open when shooting as you can often catch sight of something good about to happen in your peripheral vision, be it a guitar spin, or a jump, or just a really nice bit of interaction between people on stage.'

Stay flexible – and polite

While Knight is full of useful advice, she reckons there is no 'one size fits all' approach for gig photography. 'Part of the fun is finding yourself in a challenging situation and knowing how to pull something out of it that you're happy with.' That said, she reckons there are positive things you can do to give yourself the best chance of great shots from a gig or festival. 'It pays to be personable – so build relationships and trust. Chatting to venue staff, and to the people you're at the front with, is always a good thing, especially in venues with no pit – people in the audience are generally lovely once they realise you're not going to interfere with their enjoyment of a gig, and will often help you to get the shots you want by swapping places or letting you into their spot for a minute.'

Patience is a virtue, too. 'One of the great things about smaller venues is that there's often no time restriction other than the length of a band's set, and taking enough time to observe patterns of movement and lighting and figure out when the light is going to be in the right place or when someone is more likely to step away from their mic can make a huge difference to your results.'

It's also important to know your camera settings inside out, otherwise you'll waste time fumbling around in the dark and miss opportunities. 'Never be afraid to experiment, either, whether it be with angle, positioning, or camera settings (but always shoot raw). Trial and error is a large part of learning gig photography, and in smaller venues without a three-song limit, you have the luxury of time.'

Finally, she urges all gig photographers to think about etiquette, for everyone's sake. 'So don't leave the autofocus assist light on so it illuminates a performer's face, don't unnecessarily block people's view or hog space, fail to suppress on-camera flash, and generally act like you're more important than the people who've paid to see the band!'

AP
© SHONACUTT

Shona Cutt

Shona Cutt is a Bath-based graphic designer and acclaimed music photographer who has shot The Darkness and Duff McKagan amongst others, as well as touring with The Answer. Check out her site at www.facebook.com/shonacuttphotography.

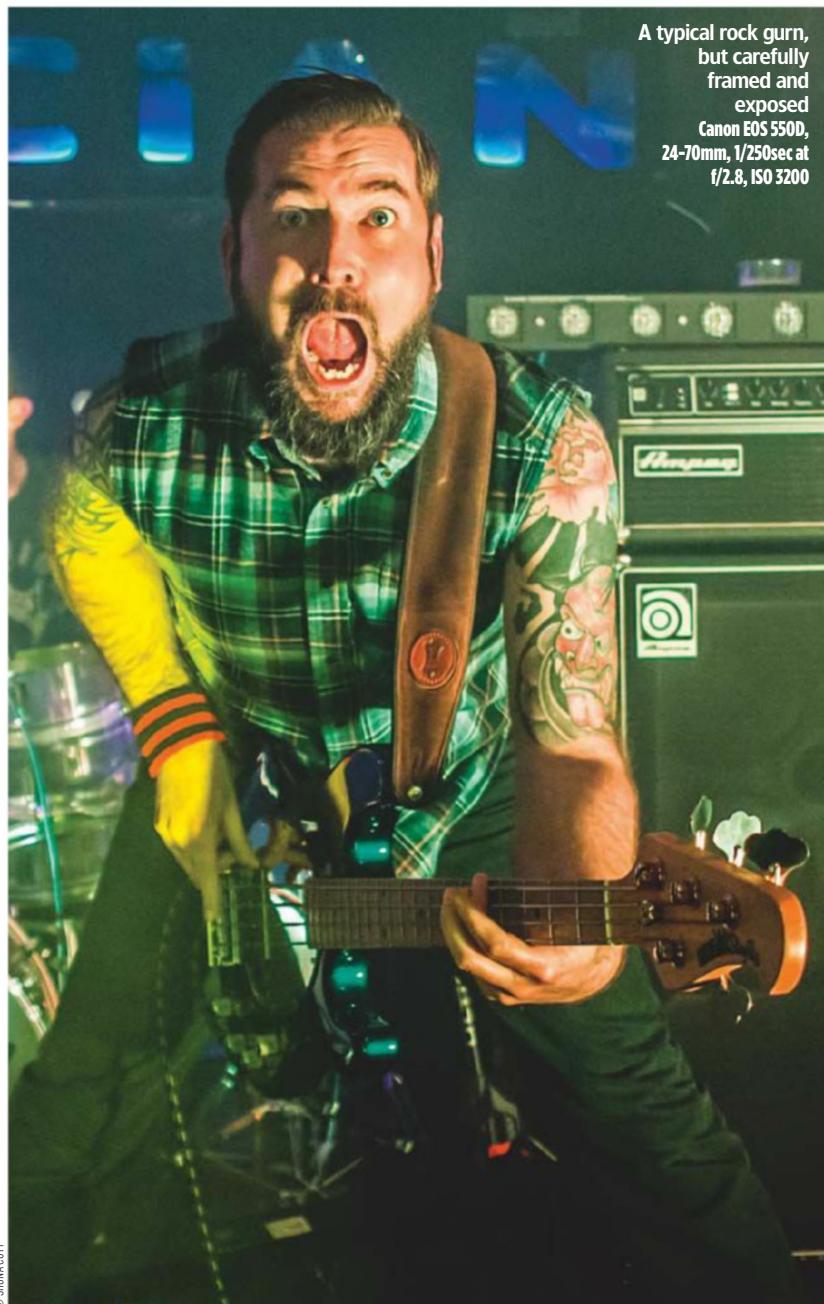


Exposure advice

Many of Knight's points are echoed by Shona Cutt, another talented gig photographer who does a lot of work in smaller venues. Cutt also gets around the lighting challenges by keeping her lens apertures wide and her ISO up. 'Noise is not so much of a worry, particularly as grain can be good for a cool rock-and-roll shot. Clients don't tend to worry about noise so much if shots are only going on social media either.' Cutt is also keen to avoid blown-out highlights on band members or instruments, another rookie error. 'I find spot metering helps quite a lot rather than evaluative, as you can pinpoint where you want to get the light from – the camera can be easily distracted by lots of stage lighting going off. Another good tip is to try to pick out particular band members with an attractive spotlight, so keep your eyes peeled.' Cutt also makes an important point about composition and timing. 'Carefully check facial expressions before you shoot – the singer won't thank you if their eyes are half shut and they are pulling a weird face. It's not attractive, but a "rock gurn" from a guitarist mid-solo is often OK. Try to get as much face as possible, hair permitting!'



Shona Cutt got into position early for this trademark jump and used her SLR's burst mode
Canon EOS 550D, 24-70mm, 1/320sec at f/2.8, ISO 1600



A typical rock gurn, but carefully framed and exposed
Canon EOS 550D, 24-70mm, 1/250sec at f/2.8, ISO 3200

Cardinal sins of composition

Effective framing marks out true skill in gig photography. Here are some rookie errors to avoid when it comes to composition.

* Watch the mics – singers with mics in their face rarely look good and these images are unlikely to make the band's website or Facebook page. 'No matter how experienced you are, mics in faces can be a real frustration of shooting in small spaces, both in terms of blocking and awkward shadows, and people do tend to fall foul of that a lot,' says Trudi Knight.

* Watch what you chop – 'it's inevitable that you will need to make decisions about what's important to include in a shot, but chopping legs off right at the knee, or losing half an arm and a fretboard can just look careless,' she adds.

* Watch the background – another challenge with smaller venues. It's frustrating bagging a great shot of a guitarist mid-solo, only to discover that the singer's bum is in the background as they bend down to get a drink.

* Watch the stage furniture – big bulky stage monitors, amps and drum risers are also an eyesore best avoided. They can however add interesting angles and perspectives, says Shona Cutt. 'Also be prepared to edit out signs in the background, like signs to the exit or toilet,' says Shona. 'Bands want to look cool, not like they are playing next to the loos!'

Taking flight

Mirrorless cameras can't do wildlife - right?

Rob Cottle sets sail for Skomer Island, Olympus's flagship mirrorless model in hand, to prove the doubters wrong

At a glance

- £1,850 body only
- 20MP Four Thirds sensor
- Up to 60fps continuous shooting
- 5-axis in-body stabilisation
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For various reasons, I have been considering moving away from DSLRs for my wildlife photography. Heavy backpacks have never been fun to carry, and a couple of injuries have made handholding a camera and weighty lenses a chore for me. I currently use a Canon EOS 7D Mark II for the majority of my wildlife photography, as it was the best compromise between quality, weight and focusing ability that I felt I could get away with at the time. It has served me well, and even though I would like to change systems, it's not something I need to do immediately if the features and quality of a new camera mean compromising.

Micro Four Thirds, with its lightweight professional lenses, piqued my interest as a possible alternative. However, after trying a few early incarnations, I knew they weren't going to replace my DSLR any time soon. When the Olympus OM-D E-M1 was released I thought this might be the answer, but its initial promise as a wildlife camera soon

dissolved into disappointment. It had good image quality, some great lenses and was as light to carry around as I'd hoped, but it fell short due to its poor continuous-focus tracking and low-light capability, all of which go some way towards making the images I take. The idea was there, but the technology wasn't. However, I still love using this camera for just about everything else, and it doubles up as my second body when the need arises.

In late 2016, Olympus announced the flagship OM-D E-M1 Mark II. The headline specification certainly looked promising, but having been burned once already I let the model mature before making any drastic decisions. Fast forward six months, and I was itching to see if this was the camera I had hoped for. Fortunately, the loan of an Olympus OM-D E-M1

ALL PICTURES © ROB COTTLE





Puffin in flight,
Skomer Island, Pembrokeshire
Olympus 40-150mm f/2.8 + MC-14 1.4x
teleconverter, 1/2,000sec at f/6.3, ISO 400

Mark II coincided with my annual pilgrimage to Skomer Island, just off the Pembrokeshire coast. I can't think of a better place to test a camera system, as it doesn't get much tougher than photographing puffins. The puffin is the one creature that tests Darwin's theory of evolution, as I'm certain it evolved not from feathered dinosaurs but from an Exocet missile.

Skomer Island

Skomer is owned by the Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales (www.welshwildlife.org) and is a 15-minute boat ride from Martins Haven. The island is home to approximately 12,000 pairs of the wonderfully photogenic puffin, along with myriad other birds, including 350,000 Manx shearwater, razorbill, guillemot, curlew, chough and short-eared owl, to name but a few. Boarding the boat always brings a sense of excitement and anticipation, and you can't help but notice the early morning gumnness (a 4am alarm call for me) of every visitor turning to a smile.

There is little shelter and no food available on the island, so everything has to be carried. As I packed for the trip, the benefits of the Olympus system became immediately apparent. Unlike when I first took my Canon there, everything fitted snugly into one backpack, including food, water and light waterproofs. The weight is also markedly reduced, especially when compared with the likes of a Canon EOS 7D Mark II, EOS-1D X or Nikon D5. As an example, the difference between my EOS 7D Mark II with the Canon 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM Mark II and the Olympus with the 300mm f/4 is 800g, which may not sound a lot, but that's two thirds of a bag of sugar. Multiply the saving throughout your camera bag and it makes a significant difference.

Ergonomically, the Mark II looks very similar to its aesthetically pleasing

predecessor, but while holding it for the first time I realised it immediately felt a little chunkier without being weighty. It's a little heavier, which is a shame, but the new grip feels comfortable in the hand and more balanced. There are a couple of button changes at the rear, with the menu button moving to the right and the playback button moving down. I actually preferred both as they were, as my thumb hovered nicely over the menu button on the OM-D E-M1, whereas now it needs to slightly contort.

The other noticeable change sees the Fn lever turned around, which unfortunately makes it harder to operate, as it feels a little cramped against the viewfinder. The mode dial has the welcome addition of three custom positions allowing three custom shooting set-ups – something I use all the time on the Canon. Mine were set for continuous focus, back-button focus and manual, which gave an immediate starting point for different situations. The camera is highly configurable and I found it easy to mould into my way of working before I went.

Menu system

Olympus has modified the menu system but I'm not sure if the changes make it any easier – just different. A lot has been written about the complex menu, but like all cameras, once it's set up you can pretty much forget about it anyway. I would much rather have the comprehensive options than not. A 'my menu' page to access essential settings, such as that on the Canon, would be useful, although pressing the OK button to enter the 'Super control panel' on the EVF or LCD was handy for quick reference. This would be improved further if you could add and remove settings. I had no issues with the EVF, but I never found the original a problem anyway. In fact, I don't remember even thinking about it at the time. I really like

Incoming puffin on Skomer Island
Olympus 300mm f/4,
1/2,000sec at f/6.3, ISO 640



the 'WYSIWYG' display, which has always been a good feature for evaluating exposure for those of us who make the occasional mistake. I turned off the automatic eye sensor, as I found it too slow and annoying. Battery life is considerably improved and fully charging a battery took only two hours instead of the previous four. I shot for around six hours on my first visit and was merrily machine-gunning away, which resulted in 2,500 images (many of which featured a lot of sea, but no



Controls and customisation

OLYMPUS has made the OM-D E-M1 Mark II feel very much like a DSLR. It has only one obvious control missing: a thumb switch and joystick, which is handy for moving around the focus point and changing the focus array rapidly. This can be replicated to some extent with the four-way controller and a customisable Fn button. The other omissions, the individual white balance and ISO buttons, can be mapped to a single Fn button and operated by the front and rear dials. Just about all buttons,



The OM-D E-M1 Mark II has been designed to feel much like a DSLR

dials and levers are customisable, with some having a dual purpose.

The Olympus also has a few extra tricks up its sleeve. The Fn lever enables you to alter your set-up at the flick of a switch. I set it to swap from continuous focus to single or manual (if not using back-button focus). A welcome addition for me is three custom settings that have been added to the mode dial, which can be customised to access an immediate starting point to suit a specific shooting style.



'The Olympus didn't miss a beat in single shot focus mode and is as fast as any other system I've used'

puffin) and a few videos. I had two batteries and still had 12% power left on the second.

There are many other useful new additions, including dual SD card slots, Hi-Res Mode, an articulated touchscreen that's handy for low-level shooting, especially over water, and 4K video, which looks pretty good but is not something I've really examined. One feature that is not available on any other camera is Pro Capture. Basically, while you half-press the shutter button, the camera will pre-empt your shot in its buffer with up to 14 raw images until you finally capture your image. The camera will then save those 14 frames that were taken before the shutter button was fully pressed. I need to try it out more before judging, but it's an interesting addition, although I do have a perverse pleasure in grappling with a camera's limitations.

All these additions would of course be pointless if the image quality were rubbish. When viewing the raw files through Capture One, image quality

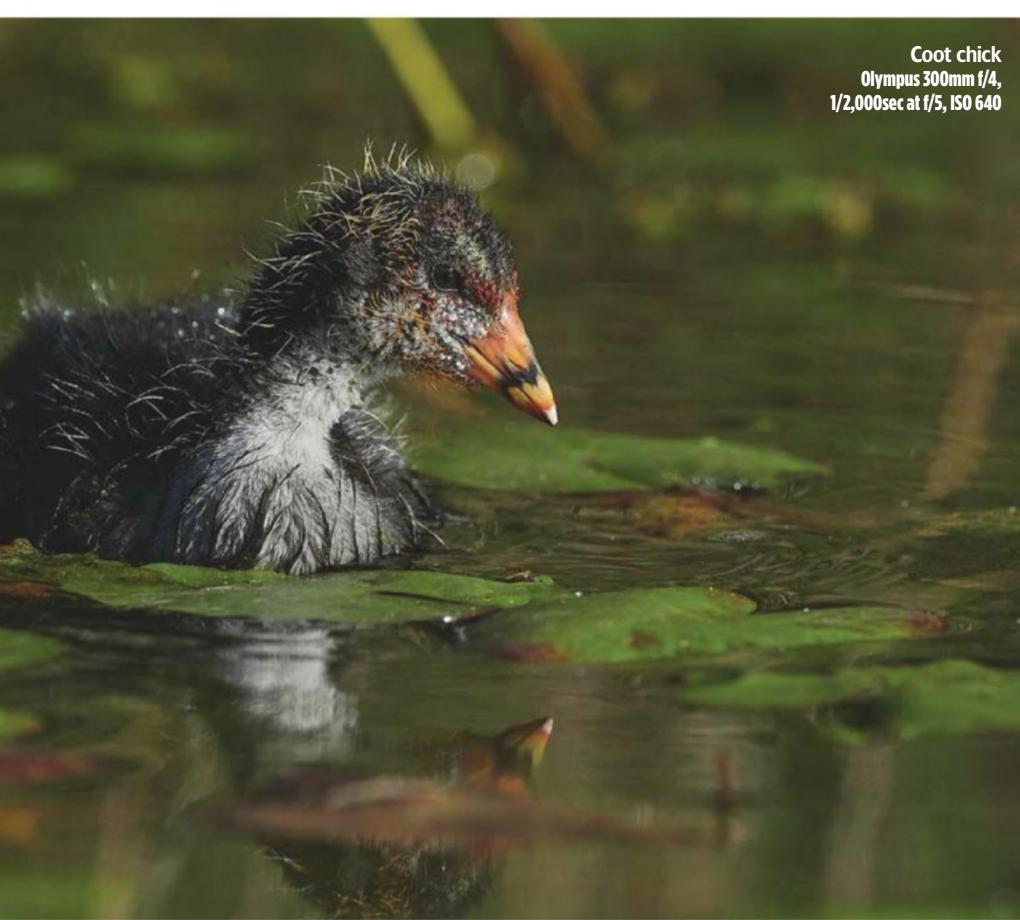
looks a step up. The resolution is greater at 20MP, with more detail, and yet ISO performance is slightly improved, especially at higher settings. Of course, it can't match full-frame cameras, but to my eyes both image quality and ISO performance are on a par with the EOS 7D Mark II. It produced fantastic saturated images that worked for me.

Lens choice

For the majority of the test I used the Olympus 40-150mm f/2.8 Pro or Olympus 300mm f/4 Pro. Both are truly professional lenses, being solid, weather sealed and, most importantly, sharp. They are also half the weight of comparative lenses (in 35mm terms) without their quality or capabilities being compromised. I often used both with the Olympus 1.4x extender and I don't think you would know if one had been used or not. The 5-axis image-stabilisation system has been improved, but it was already the best I have used anyway. It's amazing that, thanks to the weight reduction and image stabilisation, it's possible to handhold an 840mm lens (in 35mm terms) and achieve a sharp shot without a tripod, even in relatively low light.

The Micro Four Thirds system has been criticised for its bigger depth of field, due to the 2x crop factor. However, in some areas of Skomer the puffins come incredibly close, and at these moments I found depth of field to be practically non-existent, due to the incredible close-focus capabilities of the Pro MFT lenses – so much so, that many images had an eye in focus and the cheek not. As depth of field narrows, the closer the viewer feels to the subject. With these lenses, bokeh is as diffuse as you want. The exposure and auto white balance were the best I've used, and as you are seeing the actual shot in the viewfinder it is easy to alter using exposure compensation.

The Olympus didn't miss a beat in single-shot focus mode and is as fast as any other system I've used. I could have done with a smaller single focus point, as there were moments when it caught the wrong focus point when aiming at a small target in the distance among grass, or when trying to capture a bird through branches. The Olympus can shoot at 18fps with full AF – which is quicker than the Canon EOS-1D X Mark II – and at a frankly eye-watering 60fps when using the electronic shutter. Mind you, if you have shot at 6fps for several bursts, you will know how mind-numbingly boring it is to cull your photos, and you may not be quite so interested in this feature. I capped it at 10fps, which



Puffin with sandeels
Olympus 300mm f/4,
1/2,500sec at f/5.6, ISO 640



→ was plenty fast enough for me, but at least I knew the speed was there if I needed it.

Many wildlife photographers (including myself) have a temptation to judge a camera on focus, speed and low-light capability, even though pictures with such requirements may only constitute a small percentage of our photography. After all, the majority of my subjects don't move particularly quickly. However, there are critical moments where focusing speed is crucial: birds in flight, a running cheetah and a swinging monkey are all shots you'll want to nail if the chance to capture them arises. And Skomer puffins travel so fast, I'm surprised they don't wear crash helmets.

I experienced varying results when I visited Skomer with my Canon. Many of my shots of puffins in flight were either not sharp or not even in the frame. As a result, I was extremely interested to see how the Olympus would fare. My honesty may surprise you, but there wasn't a huge difference. While this might sound like damning with faint praise, remember this is a system that supposedly cannot capture this kind of shot – and I'm comparing it to the 7D Mark II. Unlike the Canon, however, the Olympus will be continuously improved upon over its lifetime. I never once felt handicapped using it, and continuous focus is on a par with most DSLRs. All cameras struggle with puffins in flight and some problems may indeed be down to camera limitations. However, more often than not it's because of technical ability and operator error. I do

Size and weight

ONE BIG advantage of the Micro Four Thirds system is, of course, the lighter weight. Some have also questioned the Pro lenses being large and heavy when the whole idea of the system was to be small and light. My feeling is, everything is relative and you need to compare like for like. With the cameras side by side, it is immediately noticeable how much smaller the Olympus is than the Canon 7D Mark II, with a difference of approximately 500g. Against the Canon EF 100–400mm f/4.5–5.6L IS II USM, the Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 300mm f/4 IS Pro looks similar in stature, but has a weight saving of approximately 400g. Swap the 100–400mm to a Canon EF 400mm f/4L DO IS II USM, which is the equivalent in APS-C terms, for a direct comparison and the difference is about 1.2kg.

It's not all about pro lenses, either. For relatively modest sums, the micro system has some very nice quality lightweight lenses. I use the cheaper Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 9–18mm f/4–5.6 wideangle, which is incredibly petite, but not short on quality, along with a Samyang 7.5mm fish-eye, a 25mm Panasonic/Leica H-X025E DG Summilux and an M.Zuiko 60mm f/2.8 Macro Digital ED. All of these add up to less than 1kg.



The Canon 7D Mark II and EF 100–400mm vs OM-D E-M1 Mark II and M.Zuiko 300mm

'The Olympus acquitted itself very well in trying circumstances, and I found it quite liberating'

think there is a misconception that if you shell out a lot of cash on state-of-the-art technology, all you have to do is point it in the direction of a flying puffin and the camera will do the rest. However, that's not the case. With all other 'normal' birds in flight, I had an almost 100% success rate and any shortcomings were likely down to me.

As with all sophisticated AF systems, it takes a bit of a tweak to get the best out of it. With a little trial and error, reading the manual and researching on the internet, I was able to work out a few methods to improve my hit rate when shooting puffins in flight. I used continuous focus with CF-lock on +2, 10fps on low burst mode (high will fix the focus to the first shot) and mostly used the 5 or 9 focus arrays, as a single focus point was almost impossible to use on these feathered missiles.

I quickly realised that turning off review stopped a blackout happening at the end of shooting a burst. Tracking does work to some extent, but it struggles if you don't have a clean background. It also seems as if Olympus didn't quite know how to implement it, as it looks like a green Star Wars gunsight, whereas the Canon looks no different to using continuous autofocus. Sometimes I would lose focus, but by

quickly releasing the shutter button and pressing again, it was rapid to reacquire. If the bird was against a plain sky, all focus points engaged and worked as well as any other system. However, if shooting against anything even slightly more complicated, the focus point often caught something else. It would be useful if Olympus were to add more point arrays and C-AF lock options similar to the Canon in future firmware updates. I found that nine points were often too few, but all points were too much, and in continuous focus, unlike with the Canon, the initial focus point didn't track the subject in any multiple arrays other than 'all'.

Enjoy yourself

Would I purchase this camera? You probably aren't surprised to hear I would. Overall, the Olympus acquitted itself extremely well in trying circumstances, and I found it quite liberating. This format has always appealed to me but hasn't previously been up to the task. There is still a compromise to be made compared to the top cameras (which are twice the price and weight), but now it doesn't feel as if I'm missing out. In fact, there are exciting additional features that other cameras do not have. It is quite a step up from the original, with super-fast burst



Above: Herring gull
Olympus 300mm f/4,
1/1,000sec at f/7.1, ISO 500

speed, improved image quality and a much improved focus system along with a whole host of improvements. Olympus continuously updates its cameras through firmware and I think there are extra capabilities inside its little body that just need to be tweaked to improve it further.

I may miss a few shots here and there, but if changing to the Olympus enables me to stay out and shoot for longer, I will take far more images anyway. I sometimes think we forget that one of the reasons we take part in this pastime is to enjoy ourselves. If a camera starts to be a barrier to this and we venture out less, we are doing something wrong.

Below: Guillemot
Olympus 300mm f/4,
1/1,250sec at f/6.3,
ISO 400





At a glance

£579 body only

- 24.2-million-pixel APS-C CMOS sensor
- DIGIC 7 image processor
- ISO 100-25,600 (expandable to ISO 100-51,200)
- 5fps continuous shooting
- Dual Pixel AF
- 3in, 1,04-million-dot vari-angle touchscreen
- Single SD card slot (UHS-I compatible)
- Wi-Fi, NFC and Bluetooth

Canon EOS 200D

Canon's lightweight and beginner-friendly DSLRs have always been popular, but how good is the company's latest adaptation? **Michael Topham** tests it to find out

For and against

- + World's lightest DSLR with vari-angle screen (at the time of writing)
- + Fast focusing performance in live view
- + Intuitive layout of buttons and dials
- + Guided user interface helps beginners learn the key controls and settings
- Basic arrangement of 9 AF points
- Handgrip is slightly more slippery than the EOS 100D
- Single scroll dial on the top-plate
- Canon doesn't produce a battery grip for the camera

Data file

Sensor	24.2-million-pixel APS-C sensor
Output size	6,000x4,000 pixels
Focal length mag	1.6x
Lens mount	Canon EF / EF-S mount
Shutter speeds	30-1/4,000sec + bulb
ISO	100-25,600 (51,200 extended)
Exposure modes	PASM, Auto, Scene
Metering	63-zone dual-layer sensor
Metering modes	Evaluative, partial, spot, centre-weighted
Exposure comp	±5 EV in 1/3 or 1/2-stop steps
Drive	5fps
Video	Full HD (1920x1080), 60p
LCD	3in, 1,04-million-dot vari-angle touchscreen
Viewfinder	Pentamirror with 95% coverage
AF points	9, including 1 cross-type
Memory card	SD/SDXC/SDHC
Power	LP-E17 rechargeable Li-ion battery
Battery life	Approx 620 shots per charge
Dimensions	122.4x92.6x69.8mm
Weight	453g with battery and card

Just a few months after adding the EOS 800D to its range of beginner DSLRs, Canon unveiled the replacement for its four-year-old EOS 100D. The Canon EOS 200D is small, lightweight and very convenient to carry on the go.

Bearing the distinction of being the world's lightest APS-C DSLR to feature a vari-angle screen, it slots in between the entry-level EOS 1300D and the more advanced EOS 760D and EOS 800D models. It's a camera aimed at those looking to purchase their first DSLR as well as people who'd like to develop their skills.

The EOS 200D is petite in DSLR terms, but don't let that fool you into thinking it's lacking in up-to-date features. It boasts Dual Pixel CMOS AF technology, a vari-angle screen and Wi-Fi. So, what's the camera like to use?

Features

Canon has done away with the 18MP APS-C CMOS chip as used in the EOS 100D and replaced it with a 24.2MP APS-C CMOS sensor. This sensor is identical to that used in the EOS 77D and EOS 800D, and works in tandem with Canon's latest DIGIC 7 image processor. The new processor has improved the continuous-shooting speed – albeit marginally – to 5fps, which is 1fps faster than the EOS 100D.

As with the EOS 800D, the EOS 200D offers an ISO range of 100-25,600, which can be expanded to a maximum of ISO 51,200 in its 'H' setting. It comes with an Auto ISO setting, where the ceiling is ISO 25,600.

It was only a matter of time before Canon's Dual Pixel CMOS AF system filtered down to more basic EOS cameras, and at the



This action shot was captured using the 200D's 5fps burst mode while testing the camera with a telephoto zoom lens Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM, 1/800sec at f/5.6, ISO 400

time of writing the EOS 200D is the cheapest DSLR in Canon's line-up to feature this technology. This sensor-based, phase-detection autofocus system not only introduces high-performance Servo AF tracking, but it also rules out the lethargic AF performance in live view mode that's associated with older Canon DSLRs.

The EOS 200D presents a fairly basic layout of nine AF points in a diamond formation with one single cross type in the centre. This arrangement is identical to the EOS 100D and presents an AF working range of 0.5EV to 18EV.

As well as offering the full manual shooting control you'd expect from a DSLR, the EOS 200D offers good options for beginners in the shape of a Scene Intelligent Auto mode, a selection of Creative Filters, as well as 11 scene modes, all of which are easy to access.

directly from the mode dial. Metering and exposure are looked after by a 63-zone dual-layer metering sensor. Exposure can be refined using the exposure-compensation system, which offers 1/3-stop or 1/2-stop increment adjustment over a ±5EV range.

The shutter-speed range spans 30sec-1/4,000sec and, like most of Canon's entry-level DSLRs, there's only a single scroll dial on the top-plate. To make quick adjustments on the fly, there's an impressive 3in, 1,04-million-dot vari-angle touchscreen, above which is an optical viewfinder.

Although coverage isn't a full 100%, at 95% it's respectable for a camera of this type, and

benefits from dioptre correction and depth-of-field preview.

The built-in flash has a guide number of 9.8m (ISO 100), and a flash recycle time of 3 seconds.

The EOS 200D boasts built-in Wi-Fi. This ties in with the Canon Connect app, which permits images to be shared between mobile devices and allows the user to take control of the camera's key settings when working remotely. In addition, it is NFC equipped and there's the option to initiate an always-on low-energy Bluetooth link between camera and mobile device.

Build and handling

The polycarbonate resin and carbon-and-glass-fibre body is adequate enough to shake off the occasional bump. Naturally, though, it's not as robust as more expensive models in Canon's range. The leatherette finish of the EOS 200D's handgrip doesn't offer the same level of grip as its predecessor, but is more consistent with other Canon models and looks more stylish.

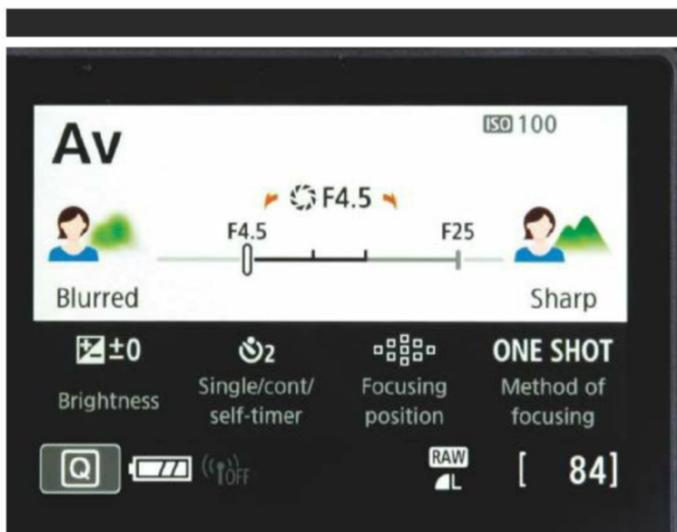
While it's a small camera, its dimensions are actually very slightly greater than the EOS 100D's. It's a camera you'll really want to get in your hands and try out before you buy.

Live view, playback and exposure-compensation buttons are all found in the same place as on the 100D, with the quick-menu button once again being located in the centre of a small D-pad. To the right of the thumb rest are the AF point selection and exposure lock buttons, which double up as zoom buttons in playback.

The single scroll dial on the top-plate is used to control aperture and shutter-speed settings when shooting in the respective aperture-priority or shutter-priority modes. To adjust aperture with this dial when shooting in manual mode, you're required to press and



The 18-55mm kit lens can be restrictive. Users looking for a longer zoom may want to consider the Canon EF 70-300mm f/4-5.6 IS II USM Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM, 1/125sec at f/11, ISO 400



Guided user interface

WE'VE seen Canon roll out its new guided user interface across several DSLRs, including the EOS 800D and EOS 77D. It has been designed to aid newcomers to a DSLR who'd prefer a more animated menu and some basic shooting advice based on the exposure mode that's selected.

For example, with shutter-priority mode selected, the rear LCD reveals a slider graphic of where in the range the shutter speed is currently set. Tapping the Q button gives users the opportunity to increase or decrease the shutter speed using the touchscreen as well as adjusting exposure compensation, drive mode, focus position and the method of

focusing (One Shot, AI Focus, AI Servo) from the same screen. The advice doesn't go into any great detail, but should prove useful to users just starting out with a DSLR who may be unsure of how changing key camera settings will affect their images.

The guided menu display simplifies the standard menu display by grouping all four sub-menu tabs – Shooting, Playback, Function and Display Level – together on a single screen, with a brief description of what is found within each. The good news is that both the shooting screen and menu display are optional, so when you feel you have outgrown them, they can be switched off.

hold the AV button at the rear, which soon becomes second nature.

On the top-plate, the on/off switch is now separated from the mode dial, making it less awkward to operate with your thumb. Pushing the switch beyond its on/off settings engages video mode. The mode dial has been simplified and the PASM manual modes are clearly marked from the automatic modes. In front of the mode dial there is a display button to switch off the screen when it's not being used. Both the ISO and DISP buttons are fairly spongy, though, and need to be pushed quite hard before they do anything. Ahead of these you get a knurled scroll dial and the shutter button.

There's a new connectivity button on the top of the camera to the left of the pop-up flash, which can be used to initiate a fast wireless connection. A green LED blinks to tell you the camera's Wi-Fi is active, and turns constant when connected. Below the lens release is a depth-of-field preview button.

The build quality of the EF-S 18-55mm f/4-5.6 IS STM kit zoom is about as good as one would expect for a starter lens. It doesn't have a metal mount and isn't the retractable type, but its optical image stabiliser is effective.

Viewfinder and screen
Vari-angle screens have been found on more advanced models in the EOS line-up, so it's good to see one introduced on the entry-level

EOS 200D. It's one of the main advancements over its predecessor and makes it a real pleasure to use. A small notch has been cut out of the body just below the live-view button to make it easy to pull out, and the screen sits virtually flush to the back of the camera when it's pushed back in. The touchscreen is so sensitive and precise that you'll find you rarely press an incorrect icon or menu setting. Touch control of the screen also comes into its own for inspecting images in playback mode, where you can use pinch-and-zoom gestures to zoom in. You can also double-tap the screen in playback to pull up a magnified view, while hitting the Q button in playback opens options such as rate, resize and rotate. If you prefer, however, you can disable touch control altogether.

The optical viewfinder seems large for one that covers 95% coverage of the frame with 0.87x magnification. It can't be customised to display things like the drive mode or battery level, but it can be set up to prompt you when the monochrome picture style or spot metering is set. There's also a rubber eye cup and diopter control.

Autofocus

Raise the viewfinder to your eye, or hit the AF point-selection button when the screen is active, and you can view the nine AF points. One is found above and below the central cross-type point, with a pair of AF points offset either side. The AF



Black & white images can be taken in-camera by setting the EOS 200D's picture style to monochrome.
Canon EF-S 18-55mm f/4-5.6 IS STM, 1/1600sec at f/6.3, ISO 800



The EOS 200D records faithful, true-to-life colours in its images

Canon EF-S 18-55mm f/4-5.6 IS STM, 1/800sec at f/4.5, ISO 100

points on the left and right of the frame can be selected using the directional buttons on the D-pad. To toggle between manually selecting the AF point and automatic selection mode, hit the AF point selection button followed by the Q/Set button. While the number of AF points is low, they are spread fairly widely across the frame. Testing the camera in a low-light scene revealed that the centre cross-type AF point is the quickest to acquire focus, so you may sometimes find yourself half depressing the shutter to focus before reframing.

The addition of Dual Pixel AF has made the EOS 200D far superior to the EOS 100D when focusing in live view. While most users will stick to one-shot AF for static subjects, there's the continuous focus (AI

servo) option for moving subjects. There's also a tracking AF method, whereby you pinpoint the subject you'd like the camera to follow and focus by first tapping the screen. It's fairly responsive, but as with other recent Canon DSLRs I have tested, I tended to get better results with fast-moving subjects by tracking the subject in the centre of the frame with the AF method set to zone AF and the AF operation set to Servo.

Performance

Investing in your first DSLR is a big decision. Two of the key things you'll want to look for are a reliable camera that's well supported by a wide range of lenses and accessories. The Canon EOS 200D delivers in both these respects. It put in a solid



Focal points

The EOS 200D squeezes a good number of attractive features into its compact body

Auto Lighting Optimizer

This is Canon's term for in-camera post-processing to automatically adjust shadows and highlights in high-contrast images. It can be set to four settings – disable, low, standard and high, with the option to disable it separately during manual exposure.

Dual Pixel AF

Autofocus in live view is possible over approximately 80% of the frame. The Servo AF mode and three different AF methods (Live tracking, Zone AF and 1-point AF) are accessed from the quick menu.

Lenses

As well as accepting Canon's EF-S mount lenses, the EOS 200D is fully compatible with the EF lens range. Apply the 1.6x crop factor to work out the equivalent focal length.

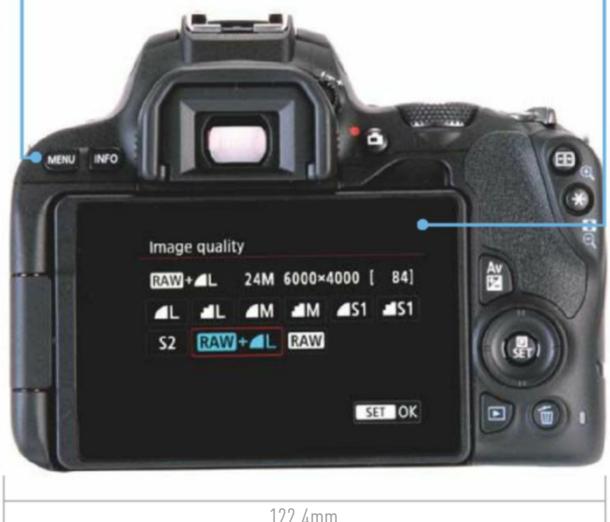


Custom functions

Some camera functions, such as ISO expansion, AF-assist beam firing and mirror lock-up are hidden away in the camera's custom functions (C.Fn) area of the menu.

Vari-angle touchscreen

The superb vari-angle touchscreen pulls out by 180°, from which it can then be tilted by 270°. It's very well engineered and can be flipped in on itself to protect it from scratches and fingerprints when not in use.





A shallow depth of field is possible at the long end of the 18-55mm kit zoom
Canon EF-S 18-55mm f/4-5.6 IS STM, 1/1250sec at f/5.6, ISO 400

► performance during testing and would certainly appear to be reliable and long-lasting if well looked after, despite not being weather-sealed.

The EF-S 18-55mm f/4-5.6 IS STM lens that you can buy with the camera is as good a place as any to start for a beginner, although it won't take long before its limitations are reached. If you'd prefer a bit more reach at the long end, you may prefer the EF-S 18-135mm f/3.5-5.6 IS STM lens bundle. It'll save you looking for a second lens, but does cost an extra £240. Like the 18-55mm kit lens, the stepper motor (STM) allows for perfectly smooth transitions of focus when shooting. Not only that, but the motor is silent.

Buying into the Canon system means the camera is supported by a vast range of lenses and accessories. As well as accepting EF-S-mount lenses, the EOS 200D is compatible with Canon's EF lens range, and masses of lenses are also available from third-party manufacturers such as Sigma, Tamron and Tokina.

The only thing you'll want to remember is that attaching long, heavy lenses to such a compact body can upset the feel of the camera in the hand. Using the EF 70-300mm f/4-5.6 IS II USM did make things seem rather front heavy. It's clearly a camera that looks and handles at its best when it's used with small zooms and primes. Saying that, great results can be achieved with heavier telephoto zooms as illustrated in some of the images that support this review – just be prepared to make a compromise in terms of handling.

The EOS 200D meets its 5fps quota. With a SanDisk Extreme Pro SDHC card loaded, it captured five JPEG and raw files continuously before the buffer was full. Setting the camera to record raw files only saw it record the same number of frames, whereas shooting solely JPEG files allowed me to fill the card at 5fps and not worry about missing a shot by having a burst interrupted.

A study of real-world images revealed that the 63-zone dual-layer metering sensor does an excellent job, and there's no favouritism towards under or overexposure. Some users may like to view the histogram or highlight clipping warning, which is displayed by hitting the info button in playback mode.

Having a camera battery with good stamina is important. The EOS 200D's has an advantage over some of its mirrorless rivals in the way it can shoot up to 650 frames from a single charge when the viewfinder alone is used. This should suffice for most people's needs. It's worth noting, though, that the battery life drops to 260 shots per charge when the camera is used in live view. A spare LP-E17 battery for the camera will set you back £43.

The EOS 200D should perform well in the hands of the beginners and novices it's aimed at. I'd have liked to see it shoot a more raw files at 5fps before the buffer was full, but there are other models, such as the Canon EOS 800D, that perform better in this respect. The AF performance in live view is where it really excels over the EOS 100D and there's currently no entry-level DSLR with a better vari-angle screen.

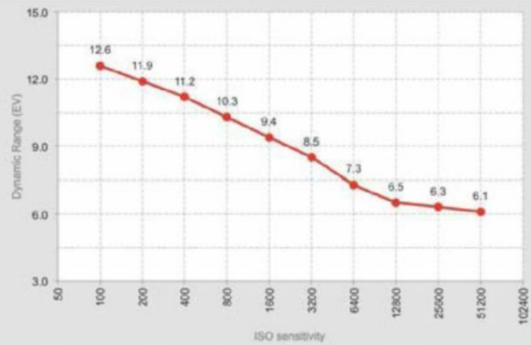
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Lab results

Andrew Sydenham's lab tests reveal just how the camera performs

The image quality results from the EOS 200D are very similar to those from the Canon EOS 800D and EOS 77D. This isn't a huge surprise given that the EOS 200D has the same sensor and processor. The EOS 200D's sensor retains an optical low-pass filter and the increase to 24.2-million pixels sees it resolve slightly finer detail as well as return higher dynamic range figures across its sensitivity range compared to the 100D. The noise performance is particularly impressive, with ISO 6400 being eminently usable in low light.

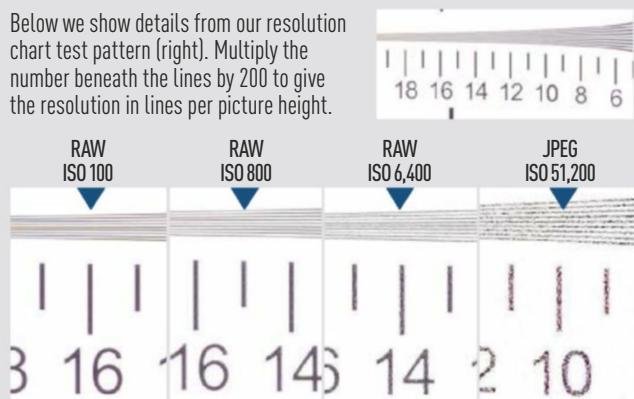
Dynamic range



At ISO 100, the EOS 200D returned a high dynamic-range figure of over 12EV, which is on a par with the likes of the EOS 800D and EOS 77D and higher than the 11.7EV figure as previously recorded by the EOS 1300D. It manages to maintain a figure above 10EV up to ISO 800, beyond which point it drops to 9.4EV at ISO 1600 and 8.5EV at ISO 3200. The 7.3EV recorded figure at ISO 6400 is impressive, but this is as high as I'd be willing to push the sensitivity on a regular basis. The drop to 6EV at the three highest sensitivities clearly indicates shadow detail is more heavily affected by noise at these settings.

Resolution

Below we show details from our resolution chart test pattern (right). Multiply the number beneath the lines by 200 to give the resolution in lines per picture height.



Shooting raw yields sharper results than if the camera is left to sharpen JPEGs automatically. Whereas the EOS 100D resolved a maximum of 3,000l/ph at ISO 100, the EOS 200D has no difficulty resolving close to 3,400l/ph at the same sensitivity setting. Detail is preserved well as the sensitivity is increased, with an impressive 2,800l/ph being resolved up to ISO 6400. Detail starts to deteriorate with the introduction of more noise, but 2,400l/ph and 2,000l/ph are still recorded at ISO 25,600 and ISO 51,200 respectively.



Our cameras and lenses are tested using the industry-standard Image Engineering IQ-Analysers software. Visit www.image-engineering.de for more details

Noise

Both raw and JPEG images taken from our diorama scene are captured at the full range of ISO settings. The camera is placed in its default setting for JPEG images. Raw images are sharpened and noise reduction applied, to strike the best balance between resolution and noise.

RAW ISO 100



RAW ISO 6400



RAW ISO 25,600



Out-of-camera JPEGs retain an acceptable level up to ISO 1600, but the automatically applied in-camera processing does start to soften fine detail beyond this point. It's recommended to select the raw format for the finest results at high sensitivities. Our tests reveal luminance noise starts at ISO 800, and although it becomes more prevalent at ISO 3200 and ISO 6400, both settings are what I'd consider to be usable with some careful application of noise reduction in post-production. Saturation starts to reduce from ISO 12,800 onwards, with ISO 25,600 and ISO 51,200 producing a level of noise you'll want to avoid. Whereas ISO 3200 was the limit at which I'd want to shoot on the EOS 100D, I'd happily push up to ISO 6400 on the EOS 200D when it's required.

RAW ISO 800



RAW ISO 12,800



RAW ISO 51,200



The competition



Nikon D3400

Price £449
(with 18-55mm kit lens)
Sensor 24.2MP APS-C CMOS
ISO 100-25,600
Continuous shooting 5fps
Reviewed 7 March 2017



Pentax K-S2

Price £578
(with 18-50mm kit lens)
Sensor 20.1MP APS-C CMOS
ISO 100-51,200
Continuous shooting 5.4fps
Reviewed 20 May 2015



Canon EOS 800D

Price £869
(with 18-55mm kit lens)
Sensor 24.2MP APS-C CMOS
ISO 100-51,200
Continuous shooting 5fps
Reviewed 20 May 2017

Read the full tests of these cameras at www.amateurphotographer.co.uk/reviews

Verdict

ALTHOUGH the EOS 200D is a fraction larger than the EOS 100D it replaces, it remains one of the smallest and lightest models in Canon's entry-level DSLR line-up. It's a camera that's well geared up for beginners who'd like to pursue the realms of photography beyond a basic compact or smartphone, and by spending around £300 more than you would on the EOS 1300D you get some appealing features that justify the extra outlay. As well as its sensor, which performs better in low-light, the EOS 200D can shoot a burst of images 2fps faster, offers a far superior focusing performance in live view and presents a truly superb vari-angle touchscreen screen that's the best of any camera in its class.

Canon has been building its line-up of DSLRs during the past couple of years to ensure there's a camera that caters for everyone's needs and requirements. While having lots of choice is no bad thing, it does make the decision over which camera you choose rather more difficult. If a small and lightweight body are your main priorities, this is where the EOS 200D has the advantage, whereas if you'd feel you'd benefit from a more advanced 45-point AF system, 5-axis electronic stabilisation for movie recording as well as the ability to shoot more raw files continuously at a faster 6fps, the EOS 800D might tempt you. The fact it costs around £190 more might mean it exceeds your budget, though, in which case



you'll quickly be swayed back towards the EOS 200D.

There's a lot to like about the EOS 200D – it's reliable, well constructed, has good battery life and most importantly, delivers excellent images straight out of the camera. The wireless connectivity works well, too, and offers a seamless way of getting your shots across to mobile devices ready to share. It does feel a touch overpriced at £579 (body only) or £679 with the 18-55mm kit lens, but give it a few months and I foresee the body-price dropping closer to £500. Overall, it's a very likeable entry-level DSLR that clearly has the edge over its less advanced EOS 1300D sibling.

**Amateur
Photographer
Testbench
Recommended**



FEATURES	8/10
BUILD & HANDLING	7/10
METERING	9/10
AUTOFOCUS	8/10
AWB & COLOUR	9/10
DYNAMIC RANGE	8/10
IMAGE QUALITY	9/10
VIEWFINDER/LCD	9/10



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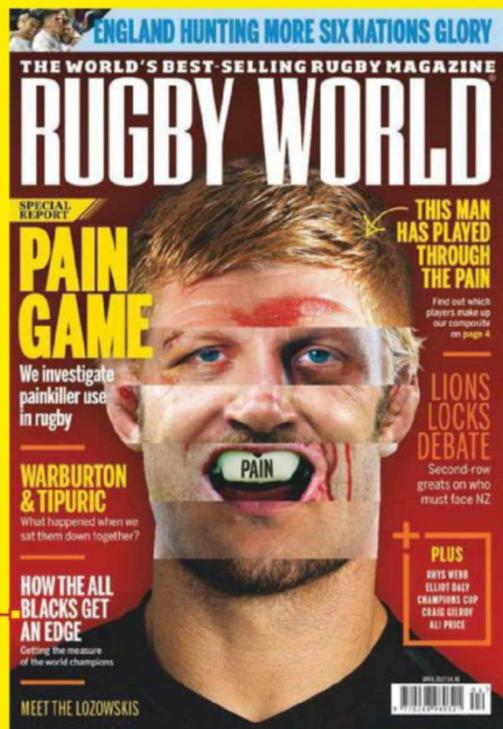
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Laowa 7.5mm f/2 MFT 'Compact Dreamer'

An ultra-wideangle prime lens always captures the attention. **Andy Westlake** takes a look at this large-aperture launch for Micro Four Thirds cameras

Laowa might not be the best-known brand when it comes to third-party lenses, but its Chinese parent company, Venus Optics, is rapidly establishing a reputation as a maker of interesting optics. The one we're looking at here is a compact, large-aperture ultra-wideangle prime for Micro Four Thirds (MFT) mirrorless cameras: the £499 Laowa 7.5mm f/2 MFT.

With its 110° angle of view, this lens is the widest-angle fixed-focal-length optic for MFT to provide a rectilinear perspective (in other words, straight lines towards the edge of the frame are rendered as such). This makes it a very different proposition to the similar-sounding Samyang 7.5mm f/3.5 MFT Fisheye, which instead

renders dramatically curved lines at the edges of the frame, enabling its huge 180° view.

Micro Four Thirds users have a lot of choice for ultra-wideangle lenses, with Olympus and Panasonic making two zooms apiece: one with premium optics, alongside a smaller, more affordable alternative. But the Laowa 7.5mm is smaller and lighter than any of them, and more affordable than all except the Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 9-18mm f/4-5.6.

Features

With an angle of view equivalent to 15mm on full frame, the Laowa 7.5mm f/2 measures 50mm in diameter by 55mm in length, and weighs a mere 170g in its standard version.

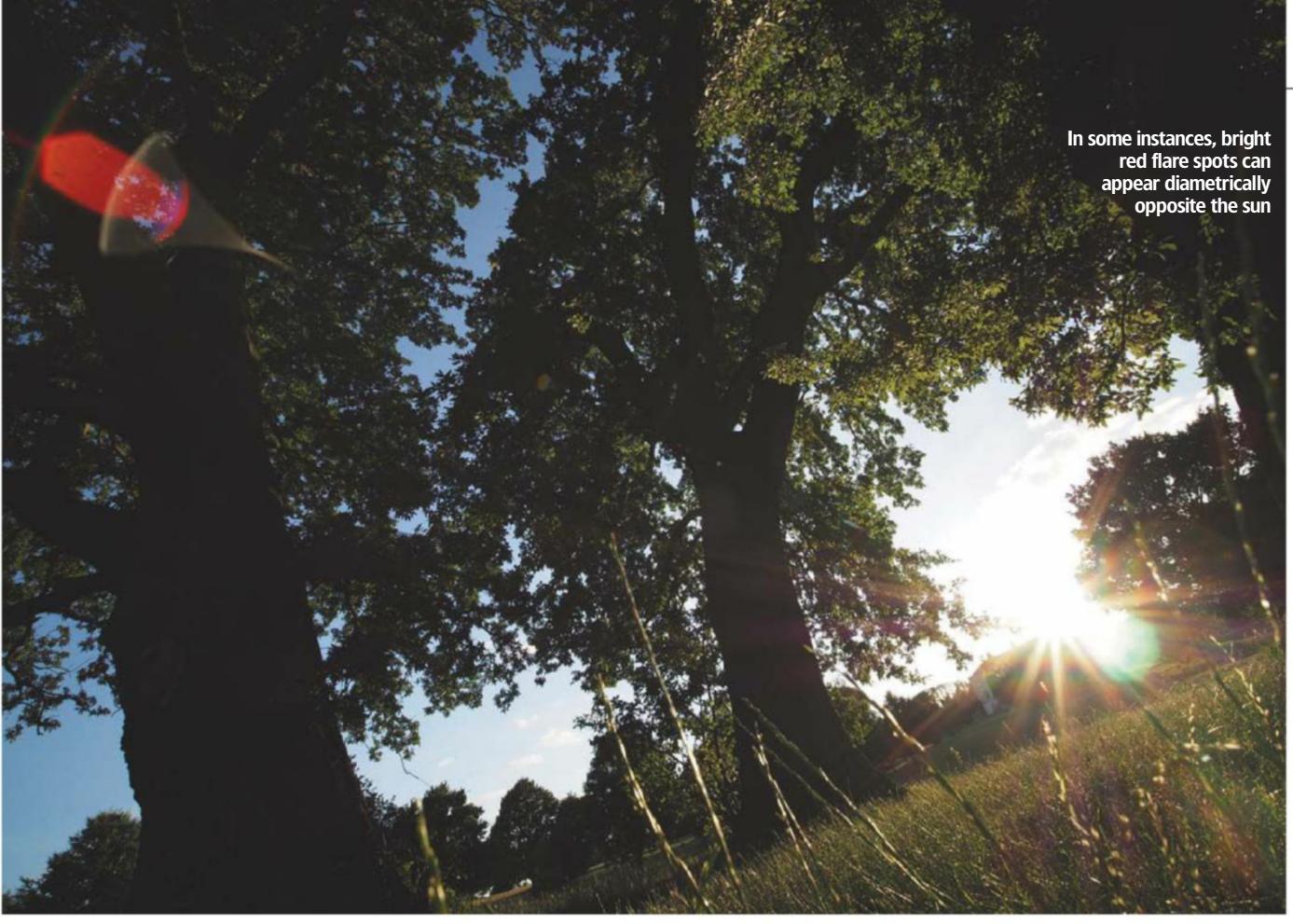
Venus Optics is also making a lightweight version for drone photography, with 20g shaved off the weight, for a £20 premium.

Despite its compact size, the lens incorporates 13 elements in 9 groups, including two aspherical elements and three made of extra-low-dispersion glass. The front element is treated with the charmingly named Frog Eye Coating, which is presumably designed to be water-repellent. Minimum focus is 12cm.

Both focusing and aperture setting are manual, controlled by traditional analogue rings around the lens barrel. At the front is a 46mm thread, making this the widest MFT lens to accept screw-in filters. It's joined by a bayonet mount for the supplied petal-type hood, which twists into place with a quarter turn, and can be stored snugly reversed over the barrel.

Build and handling

There's no disputing that the Laowa is nicely built little lens, with a robust-feeling



In some instances, bright red flare spots can appear diametrically opposite the sun

metal barrel. Some of the firm's previous designs have been decidedly utilitarian, but its quality of fit and finish seems to be improving. Our silver-coloured review sample was a perfect aesthetic match to my silver Olympus OM-D E-M5 Mark II, and a black-barrelled version is also available.

The lens isn't weatherproofed, and there's no seal around the lens mount. It has no electronics, so there's not a lot to go wrong if it gets wet, but obviously the same can't be said of the camera. This is a shame, as I suspect landscape photographers might be attracted to such a portable ultra-wideangle prime.

A broad manual-focus ring covers most of the barrel, and has a finely ridged grip. It's stiff

enough not to be knocked out of position, but still smooth enough to allow precise manual focusing. The lens uses a rear-focus system, so doesn't change length as the focus ring is rotated through its 100° travel.

The much slimmer aperture ring is positioned close to the camera body, and clicks at the whole-stop positions (there's no way to disable this for video shooting, presumably due to the barrel's compact size). Unusually, the gaps between the settings aren't evenly spaced – instead, ever-smaller rotations are needed between the smaller apertures. This means that while you can easily select intermediate settings to begin with, it's pretty much impossible from f/8 onwards.

The focus ring has a distance scale in both metres and feet, and rotates fractionally beyond the infinity position, which on my review sample was accurately marked. There's also a depth-of-field scale with markings for f/2.8, f/4, f/5.6 and f/11. But all of the numbers are painted on, rather than engraved, so there's some risk they might wear off over time.

As the lens has no electronics, it can't communicate any information to the camera. So you won't see any lens data in the EXIF, or the current aperture in the viewfinder while you're shooting; instead, you'll have to refer to the aperture ring, or count clicks as you make changes. On Olympus cameras or Panasonic bodies with in-body stabilisation, you'll also have to set the focal length manually for the IS to work properly. With Panasonic bodies, you'll also need to enable the 'Shoot without lens' setting.

Focusing

When using a manual-focus lens, it's important to polish up your focusing technique. You'll always get most accurate focus using magnified view, but as this won't be engaged automatically when you turn the focus ring, it's best to allocate it to an easily reached custom button (on the E-M5 II, I use the top-plate Fn2 button). Naturally, though, with a 7.5mm prime on MFT you'll get extensive depth of field, so I often left the lens set to f/5.6 and the infinity focus position. It's then only really necessary to adjust focus for subjects a metre away or closer.

Performance

For £499, the Laowa 7.5mm f/2 isn't exactly a cheap and cheerful option. Thankfully, its



Barrel distortion is plainly visible here in the metalwork at the top of the frame



The short minimum focus distance and ultra-wide view combine to give dramatic close-ups

optical quality goes a long way towards justifying the price. Examining images taken on my E-M5 Mark II reveal images to be dizzyingly sharp in the centre of the frame wide open at f/2, with barely any visible improvement on stopping down. The corners, unsurprisingly, don't reach the same heights, but they sharpen up quite nicely as the aperture is closed down. There's a degree of curvature of field, which means that real-world three-dimensional scenes tend to look better than chart tests might suggest – indeed, in side-by-side tests I found the Laowa to be consistently sharper than my Olympus 7-14mm f/2.8 Pro. By f/5.6 – an entirely sensible working aperture on Micro Four Thirds – you'll get pretty crisp detail right across the frame.

Other optical characteristics are typical of wideangle primes. The lens shows obvious barrel distortion, but it can be fixed by applying a correction value of +10 in Adobe Camera Raw. You'll also see green and magenta fringing towards the corners due to lateral chromatic aberration, but while this will be visible in out-of-camera JPEGs, it's a trivial one-click fix in raw processing. Perhaps more vexing to some users will be the vignetting, which is very prominent in images at f/2, and never entirely goes away on stopping down. But again it can be compensated for in software when it's detrimental to the image.

One important aspect of ultra-wideangle lenses is flare resistance, as the sun will often be either in the frame or impinging on the front element. For the most part, I saw little to worry about, but when the sun is placed across a narrow range of angles within the frame, intense red flare can appear diametrically opposite it. As usual this becomes more delineated at small apertures, but it isn't necessarily unattractive. Stop down to f/8 or smaller and you can get nice 14-ray sunstars from the lens's 7-bladed aperture.

AP

Verdict

WITH the Laowa 7.5mm f/2 MFT, Venus Optics has made a neat little lens that has a lot to recommend it. It's small, lightweight, nicely built and handles well. Optically, it's really good, too, especially when stopped down to f/5.6. Some might be deterred by its fully manual operation, but this didn't bother me at all; a lot of the time I simply left it set to infinity focus and f/5.6.

However, the real question for potential buyers, I suspect, is whether they have a gap in their kit that can be filled by this kind of ultra-wideangle prime lens. For the majority of photographers, one of the Olympus or Panasonic zooms currently available would likely be a more practical option, especially as there's a huge gap between 7.5mm and a 12mm standard zoom. But for landscape or architecture photographers who like to use filters and are happy to post-process raw files, it's a really interesting option.



Data file

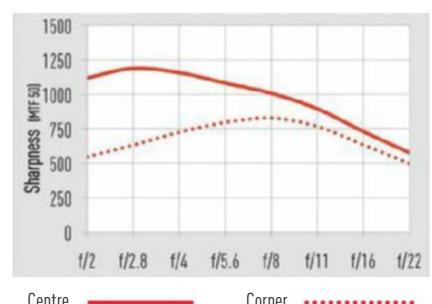
Price £499
Filter diameter 46mm
Lens elements 13
Groups 9
Diaphragm blades 7
Aperture f/2-22
Minimum focus 12cm
Length 55mm
Diameter 50mm
Weight 170g
Mount Micro Four Thirds

Amateur Photographer Testbench Recommended

Laowa 7.5mm f/2 MFT 'Compact Dreamer'

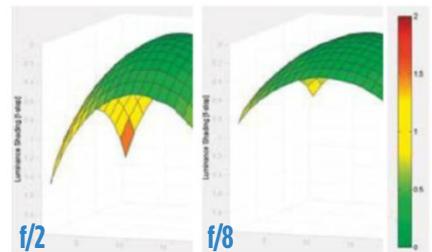
Resolution

Our Image Engineering MTF measurements reveal the lens to be staggeringly sharp in the centre of the frame wide open. There's just a fractional improvement at f/2.8, with diffraction progressively softening things thereafter. Corners are a different story, but they give perfectly respectable results on stopping down, especially from f/5.6 to f/11.



Shading

The lens shows pretty severe vignetting wide open, with 1.5 stops of light fall-off in the corners of the frame. This reduces slowly as the aperture is closed down, but only drops below 1 stop at f/5.6. At f/8 it falls to around 0.8 stops, but doesn't reduce any further at smaller apertures.



Curvilinear distortion

As tends to be the case with wideangle lenses, the Laowa 7.5mm shows quite obvious barrel distortion. With no electronics onboard to pass lens data to the camera, it's not automatically corrected either, unlike most other Micro Four Thirds lenses. But this being a prime, it's entirely predictable from shot to shot, making it relatively easy to correct in post-processing.

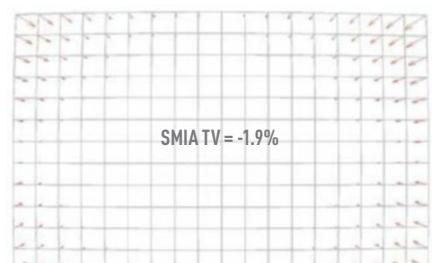




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Billingham Weekender

Is this holdall the perfect weekend bag?

Michael Topham finds out

● www.billingham.co.uk ● £225

IF YOU like going away for a few days with your camera, you'll probably need a supplementary bag to carry all those essential but unrelated photography items. Billingham's latest travel and leisure bag collection has been designed exactly with this in mind.

The largest of the new bags is the Weekender, which, as its name suggests, is intended for one or two nights away, or as complementary hand luggage for longer trips. It meets today's strict airline hand-baggage requirements and comes with a durable shoulder strap made from shuttle-woven spun polyester with solid brass fittings. The main compartment is accessed via the central zip that can be unzipped along the entire length of the bag, and its turnover-top design allows the sides to be peeled back creating an extremely wide opening to make packing a little easier. On the inside you get a large open net pocket with leather edging detail that's great for partitioning valuable items such as keys, passport, phone or a tablet from clothes or other items. Supplied for review with the optional high-strength foam base pad (£20), I found this helped give the bag extra structure along its length, while still allowing the body to flex around its width.

Billingham bags have a reputation for being superbly crafted with great attention to detail and the Weekender is no exception. You get the lovely signature Billingham logo embossed into leather on one side, the satisfying green label on the other stating it's made in England and reinforced leather handles that are contoured for comfort when being carried with one hand. The rest of the bag is made from hardwearing, yet lightweight, water and heat-resistant FibreNyte canvas. If the illustrated black-and-tan finish isn't for you, the bag is also available in sage and chocolate, khaki and chocolate, or all black.

Verdict

I used the weekender to carry clothes and day-to-day essentials for two photography trips. It's one of those bags that holds more than you think it will. When it's thrown around like most travel bags are, you're reassured by the strengthening leather on the bottom corners, which takes the brunt of any wear and tear. This fine example of a weekend bag from Billingham is a great choice for any photographer who likes to travel light and in style.



At a glance

- Dimensions 55x35x25cm (WxDxH)
- Weight 0.92kg
- 1 internal net pocket
- Made in England

Guarantee

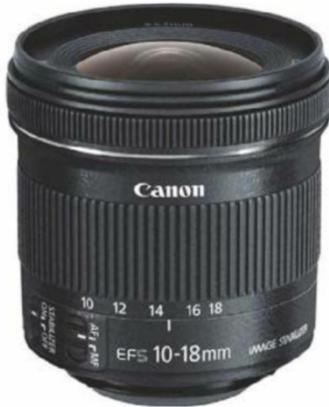
Each model in the new range comes with a five-year guarantee for peace of mind.

ALSO IN THE RANGE

The other bags that make up Billingham's new travel and leisure bag collection are the Overnighter (£185) and Thomas briefcase/laptop bag (£225). Slightly smaller than the Weekender, and ideal for a short break, the compact Overnighter provides generous capacity for everyday essentials. It has shorter external dimensions of 40x30x30cm (WxDxH) and weighs 0.79kg. The Thomas briefcase (41x9x31cm) features three deep internal pockets to organise a host of accessories, and has been specifically designed for those who wish to carry a 15in laptop or MacBook around safely and securely.

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Canon's EF-S 10-18mm f/4.5-5.6 IS STM is an ultra-wideangle zoom lens

Lens for landscapes

Q I have recently been using a macro lens for work when I needed close-up images, but I'm looking to get into landscapes and outdoor shots with a much wider angle. Can you recommend a good, inexpensive Canon DSLR lens?

Mateoj, AP forum

A I'm making the assumption that you have an APS-C-sensor Canon EOS DSLR rather than a full-frame model. You may find that the standard kit lens you probably have goes wide enough for a lot of your landscape needs. You can't really go wrong with Canon EF-S 10-18mm f/4.5-5.6 IS STM (£199) if you need to go wider. For constant-aperture zooms, the Sigma 10-20mm f/3.5 EX DC HSM (£329) and Tokina AT-X 12-28mm f/4 Pro DX (£449) are candidates, but are quite a bit more expensive.

Back-button focus

Q When people talk about back-button focus they are often quite evangelical about it, but I've tried it and I think I must be missing something. I tend to shoot in AI autofocus on my Canon EOS 7D Mark II, so when I want to take a shot I focus on the subject, hold the shutter

down halfway, and wait until the composition is just past what would have been good, and then I finish my click. If I'm in repeat-shot mode, I then just hold the shutter down and the camera follows the object in focus based on the relevant tracking options. What's different about back-button focus (outside of when the exposure is measured)?

Tony, AP forum

A In the end, the focusing technique that works for you is all that matters. That said, while back-button focusing (BBF) is not for everyone, it certainly offers great benefits if you can manage to adapt to it.

Fundamentally, BBF relocates focus activation from the default half-press of the shutter button to a thumb-operated button on the back of the camera (Focus On, on the EOS 7D). This means the shutter button only releases the shutter, making it more responsive and you won't lose control of the focusing for the next shot. Once mastered, your camera handling can be more fluid and you can concentrate much more on your framing.

BBF means you only need to lock focus once on a static subject, leaving you free to experiment with the composition without having to re-focus for each subsequent shot. You can use BBF for either single-action AF or continuous AF (AI Servo). For the latter, the Focus On button becomes a toggle to activate/deactivate focusing, retaining the correct focus if your subject stops moving about. If the subject moves out of focus again, you just press the AF On button to recommence focus tracking. You can also assign priorities for AF point position or, for AI Servo, the initial AF point.

Q&A compiled by Ian Burley



When taking photos of meteor showers, use a wideangle lens

Meteor photography

Q One night recently I took my Nikon D3300 with 75-300mm lens out in the hope of getting some photographs of meteor showers, but with no success. The D3300 is a fairly new camera to me, so I'm still learning its features and this was the first time I'd tried it at night. The camera was on a tripod and set to manual. I'd set it to the lowest aperture number and used 10-30 seconds of exposure and set the focus to manual. I tried shooting in fairly low light, but there was a bright moon. How can I get better pictures in focus and how can I focus on things like stars?

Vulcanxh558, AP forum

A First, I wouldn't recommend a telephoto zoom for this task. You need a wideangle lens because the sky is huge and you won't know where a meteor will show. You'd be much better off using the standard zoom lens at the 18mm setting, or better still a much wider lens – down to 10mm would be great and a fisheye lens would also be a good option.

Take some test shots to check that the stars are in focus and to ensure the exposure is in the correct range to reveal a good density of stars. If your lens has a focus-distance scale, set the focus to infinity. Turn all automatic focus and exposure settings to manual, including ISO sensitivity, shutter speed

and aperture. Try starting with ISO 800, f/4 and a shutter speed of around 30 seconds. If you are seeing only a few stars, the exposure is inadequate. You can increase the exposure time and/or increase the ISO sensitivity.

Remember that meteors may appear only rarely, so you should set the camera on a tripod to take several shots in a sequence lasting half an hour to an hour or more. Make sure your battery is fully charged and use a time-lapse controller or an app on your phone or tablet USB-connected to the camera to automate the shooting sequence. If you don't manage to photograph a meteor – which is quite likely, sadly – you could consider assembling your shots into a star-trail photo instead.



Professor Newman on...

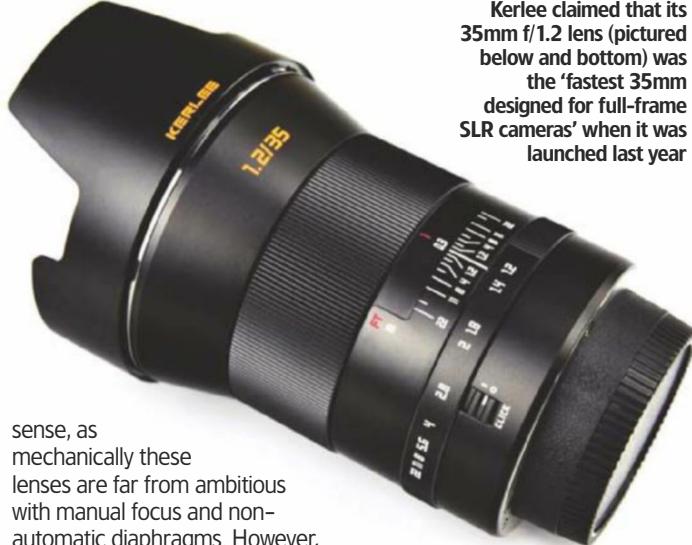
The new optical industry

Bob Newman looks at why manufacturers from China can produce such interesting and unusual lenses

The online marketplace eBay is a wonderful thing. Without leaving your house, you can find interesting products from all over the world. Occasionally, I look at the site to see if I can find any interesting and unusual glass. Recently, there has been a plethora of extremely interesting lenses emanating from China. For instance, there is a Zhongyi Speedmaster 85mm f/1.2 and a Kerlee 35mm f/1.2 wideangle. Both lenses are available in Nikon mount, refuting the old saying that f/1.2 is impossible on the F-mount (something that was obvious anyway, since Nikon still sells its 50mm f/1.2 Ai-S lens). Zhongyi also manufactures some other very fast lenses, such as a 42.5mm f/1.2, a 50mm, 35mm, 25mm f/0.95 available for mirrorless cameras in APS-C and smaller formats, plus an 85mm f/2 at a very low price.

Curious about the performance of these lenses, I found some online reviews. Some of these were from bloggers, giving their opinions, while others were based on full-fledged laboratory tests. All came to the same general conclusion, that considering their extremely wide apertures, these lenses gave a good account of themselves.

So, the question is, how is it that these manufacturers can produce such ambitious lenses? I mean ambitious in an optical



sense, as mechanically these lenses are far from ambitious with manual focus and non-automatic diaphragms. However, optically they attempt to go where the major companies fear to tread.

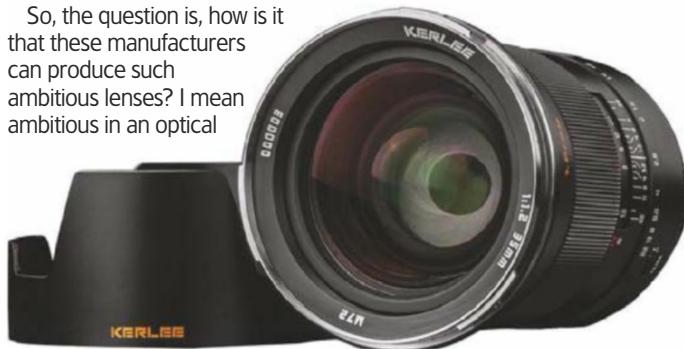
There are two parts to this answer. The first lies in China's development as a powerhouse of sub-contract manufacturing. Any component for almost any product can be sourced from China, and this includes high-quality lens elements. So, the country contains not one but many optical shops capable of grinding and polishing high-quality optical surfaces.

Shenzhen Dongzheng Optical Technology, the makers of the Kerlee lens, is one such company. These companies have been

Kerlee claimed that its 35mm f/1.2 lens (pictured below and bottom) was the 'fastest 35mm designed for full-frame SLR cameras' when it was launched last year

making lens assemblies for closed-circuit TVs and industrial cameras for years. Now they have added another element – the design of original lenses. The fact that these companies have the capability is not surprising. One of the reasons for China's growth is that it has a very good education system, geared to training engineers and scientists. Thus, any Chinese company will generally find no shortage of well-educated technical staff.

The other element, which was not around when companies such as Zeiss and Nippon Kogaku made their names, is the availability of software for lens design and the computers on which to run it. These days, any desktop personal computer has the computational capacity to design a complex lens in a few hours, and software packages such as Zemax and OSLO provide the required codes. Couple these with a well-educated workforce and production capability and you can produce lenses such as those mentioned.



Bob Newman is currently Professor of Computer Science at the University of Wolverhampton. He has been working with the design and development of high-technology equipment for 35 years and two of his products have won innovation awards. Bob is also a camera nut and a keen amateur photographer

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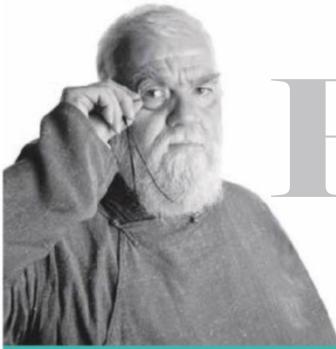
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Final Analysis

Roger Hicks considers...

'A Brahmin Priest', 2017, by Sandra Dubout



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Often, 'less is more' because when we look at a picture, our vision is filtered through our own memories, prejudices, preconceptions and experiences. Your appreciation of this picture will therefore depend on how much you know about India.

However, the exhibition of which this was part also tells you a great deal about India. The chaotic nature of the country, with its crowds and colours, is superbly illustrated in Sandra's other pictures. Intermingled with them, though, are pictures like this – reminders that the apparent chaos is made up of billions of tiny and often very still scenes. It's just that they don't always relate to one another in the way we might expect if we were brought up in the West. Sometimes, the relationships are much closer.

Sometimes they don't appear to exist at all. In order to understand how cleverly she combines 'less is more' with 'more is more', you need to see a whole exhibition, or at least to go to her site at www.facebook.com/sandraduboutphotography.

Most photographers are egotistical
This prompted me to think about what we want or expect from looking at pictures. Most photographers are, I believe, egotistical: one of the main reasons we look at others' work is because we want to learn to improve our own. This is not necessarily the same thing as wanting to emulate them, though. Sandra uses far more saturated colours than I do, but I'd be a fool if I thought, 'Ah! That's what's wrong with my pictures of India. They aren't enough like Sandra's.' More useful is, 'How are my

pictures different from Sandra's? How can I make them more like what I want?' This is very different from, 'How can I make them more like hers?'

It also reminded me of another of my theories, which I call 'osmosis' – the idea that looking at pictures infuses the soul, or mind, or heart, with an awareness of what makes a 'good picture'. We don't always need to analyse it. Indeed, we cannot always analyse it. Here we can analyse the contrasts in colour, shape and texture; we can think about 'less' and 'more', and symbols, and culture (note the wrist cord), and even the form and fragility of pots. That's all to the good. But osmosis is to do with something more, something we appreciate on a non-verbal, non-rational level: art, maybe. I learned a lot osmotically from Sandra's pictures.

Roger Hicks has been writing about photography since 1981 and has published more than three dozen books on the subject, many in partnership with his wife Frances Schultz (visit his new website at www.rogerandfrances.eu). Every week in this column Roger deconstructs a classic or contemporary photograph. **Next week he considers an image by Olive Santaoloria.**



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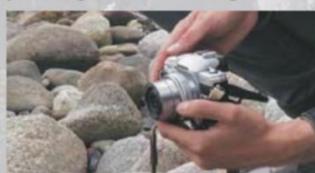
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